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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of Project ADVANCE (Adult Diploma Validating and Accrediting Necessary Competence and Experiences), an adult competency-based high school completion program, was conducted to determine program effectiveness, as viewed subjectively by recent graduates and present students. Personal interviews and/or questionnaires were given to 31 of the 34 first graduates of the program (1980), 19 present students, and several instructors and administrators of the Mounds View Community Education Department. Overall, graduates and students were extremely satisfied with the ADVANCE program, and teachers and administrators were supportive. The graduates and students were appreciative of the close relationship with the teachers that the program provided, and felt that the program definitely had a significant impact on their lives, both by the attainment of a diploma and the increased self-esteem gained through participating in the program and reaching personal goals. Students who had dropped out did so for personal reasons (finances, schedule conflicts, etc.) and not for any disappointment with the program. Half of those dropouts who were interviewed intended to return to the program. Evaluation of program content showed that the unique features of ADVANCE were the individualized diploma planning process, the assessment-of-experiential-learning program, and the performance-based curriculum. On the basis of the study, it was recommended that information about ADVANCE be disseminated; replication and implementation must remain a local decision. (KC)

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Evaluation of ADVANCE

A Nontraditional Adult Diploma Program

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Submitted To:

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June 1981

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. PERSPECTIVE

In 1978 a 309 special project grant was awarded to the Mounds View Community Education Department for a three year demonstration project entitled "A Competency-Based Skills Curriculum Model--An Alternative Approach to Adult Basic and Continuing Education." The Mounds View project, which became known as ADVANCE (Adult Diploma Validating and Accrediting Necessary Competencies and Experiences), received funding in fiscal year 1979 and 1980; however, the project was not selected for funding beyond September 1 of the third fiscal year (FY81). The decision not to fund ADVANCE for the third year was based upon the perception of ADVANCE's limited potential in the development of a statewide adult basic and continuing education delivery systems. In September 1980 the assistant coordinator of Mounds View adult special programs requested that the assistant commissioner of the State Division of Instruction commit funds for a formal evaluation of the ADVANCE project. The assistant commissioner approved the request and specified that the evaluation design focus on the program's impact on students and on cost effectiveness to enable informed judgments to be made concerning the desirability of the ADVANCE project for dissemination and its potential for cost effective replication.

II. STUDY DESIGN

The assistant commissioner specified that the research design was to be a joint responsibility of the external evaluator, the state coordinator of adult basic education and the assistant coordinator of Mounds View adult special programs. To evaluate cost factors related to ADVANCE the State Department of Education conducted a financial audit of the project. The findings of the audit are presented in a separate report.

To evaluate the impact the program had on its graduates, 31 of the first 34 graduates were interviewed. Graduates also completed a questionnaire survey form. A content analysis of graduate files was conducted for demographic data and to profile individual academic programs. Survey forms were also completed by 19 currently enrolled students. Survey instruments were reviewed by project staff and were pilot tested for administration to graduates and currently enrolled students. The instruments focused on the individual's educational history, reasons for enrolling, evaluation of program elements and post-graduation experiences in education and employment. Personal interviews were also held with a sample of 20 students who began but did not complete the ADVANCE program and with five students who selected to participate in the GED program rather than ADVANCE.

Personal interviews were also conducted with three project staff, three instructors, three individuals who assessed experiential learning, and two persons involved with other Mounds View adult education programs. These interviews focused on the individual's role and responsibility in the project, program details and operations, strengths and weaknesses of project components and benefits or limitations to dissemination and

replication activities. Personal interviews were also held with five Mounds View school district administrators concerning the history of the project, their perceptions of project quality, the need and demand for alternative adult programs, the need for project dissemination and the district's commitment to continuing the program.

III. LIMITATION OF STUDY DESIGN

The research project was limited in that it focused primarily on the impact the program had on its first 31 graduates. While a few GED students were interviewed, no attempt was made to assess the relative merits of ADVANCE and other adult programs. Although both questionnaire survey and personal interviews were used there are inherent strengths and weaknesses in both approaches. Program outcomes and benefits to students were based primarily on subjective self-reporting by graduates rather than direct measurement of "value added."

IV. FINDINGS

1. Graduates and current students are very enthusiastic about, supportive of and satisfied with the ADVANCE program. Graduates reported that ADVANCE has had a positive and constructive impact on their lives. All graduates reported that they would definitely recommend the program to others. The ADVANCE graduates developed a very strong esprit de corps.

2. The reasons ADVANCE graduates decided to return to school to complete their high school programs involved both a strong motivation to complete the diploma and a specific goal related to career entry, career advancement or further education.

3. The primary attractions to the ADVANCE program were the opportunity to earn a diploma rather than an equivalency certificate.

4. Of the first 34 ADVANCE graduates, 82 percent were women and 18 percent were men. Only one of the initial graduates was a minority group member. The median age of the graduates when they first entered the ADVANCE program was 29.5 and ages ranged from 21 to 62.

5. The median number of years ADVANCE graduates had been away from formal education was 11 and the range was from three to 45 years.

6. The diploma program of an "average" ADVANCE graduate would consist of 7.5 transfer credits, 5 ADVANCE instructional credits and 3.5 experiential learning credits. The first 31 graduates took an average of five months to complete the program; the range of time for program completion was from five weeks to 10 months. Some students who entered in FY80 but did not graduate until FY81 took much longer.

7. ADVANCE graduates found out about the program primarily through bulletins or other literature from the Mounds View School District and through referrals from WIN counselors.

8. Students were satisfied with the orientation program. Although there was initial anxiety concerning the battery of placement tests, most graduates reported that they found the tests useful and instruc-

tive. Other people interviewed had mixed reactions to the placement tests. Some felt the tests were administered too early. Others were not satisfied with the tests used.

9. To gain admission to ADVANCE students had to be reading at a 6th grade level. Most of the graduates were reading at the 8th and 9th grade level at entry.

10. ADVANCE graduates were very supportive of the concept of gaining credit for experiential learning and were pleased with the non-threatening process used to evaluate their experiential learning. Most felt that the written reports and oral presentations required to demonstrate experiential learning competencies were very beneficial. Graduates were split on the value of writing competency statements and several reported that there was a range in the quality of assessments of experiential learning. Professional educators interviewed believed that experiential learning was a valid and important concept for adult education programs. While recognizing that improvements could be made, there was general support for and satisfaction with the ADVANCE experiential learning model.

11. Graduates rated their ADVANCE teachers as outstanding. ADVANCE teachers and graduates developed very close, personal relationships. Graduates reported, however, that when the number of participants in a class reached the 15 to 20 range, accessibility to the teacher was delayed. Teachers found ADVANCE to be challenging and rewarding. There was support for having two instructors--one for mathematics and the other for language arts.

12. Most graduates felt the level of ADVANCE instruction was satisfactory although some said the program was too difficult while a few others thought it was not challenging enough. Overall, the most difficult elements of the curriculum for students were mathematics and English; the least difficult subjects were reported to be health and science.

13. Graduates felt that the areas in which they experienced the most growth as a result of the participation in ADVANCE were: (a) a sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction; (b) understanding one's own abilities, skills and interests; and (c) basic skills for personal satisfaction and self-confidence. The areas in which graduates reported little or no change were: parenting, health care and consumer economics.

14. Of the 31 ADVANCE graduates interviewed, 15 were enrolled in post-secondary education--11 at vocational technical schools and four at area community colleges.

15. Sixteen (52%) of ADVANCE graduates were employed, 14 others were not employed (10 of these were full-time students) and one was retired. Three graduates reported that they became employed after receiving their diploma and two reported a promotion as a result of their diploma.

16. Those who started but did not complete the ADVANCE program left for personal reasons (health problems, work conflicts) rather than

dissatisfaction with ADVANCE. Five of the 10 people interviewed said they definitely planned to re-enroll in ADVANCE.

17. The five GED students interviewed were satisfied with their program and with their teachers. However, ADVANCE graduates clearly believed that their program had a more dramatic impact on their lives than did the GED students.

18. Mounds View administrators were very supportive of the ADVANCE philosophy and operational program. They reported that the program was meeting real needs in a unique and innovative way. They indicated, however, that the severe budget cuts the district was experiencing necessitated that ADVANCE (similar to GED and other adult programs) be dependent upon external (state, federal or private) support.

19. Project expenditures were analyzed by auditors from the State Department of Education and a separate report on the findings of the audit was prepared.

20. The unique and distinctive features of ADVANCE include the individualized diploma planning process, the assessment of experiential learning program and the performance-based curriculum.

V. RECOMMENDATION

This research project focused on the effect the operational ADVANCE program had on participants. On the basis of the data collected in this evaluation, particularly with respect to the impact ADVANCE has had on its graduates and an assessment of the overall quality of the program, the dissemination of information about the ADVANCE project is warranted. Program replication is considered to be a decision best left to local school districts.

INTRODUCTION

> Nearly 55 million adults in the United States do not have a high school diploma. They are from both sexes, young and old, rich and poor, living in congested cities, in suburbia, and in remote and isolated areas....Many among them need a high school diploma for a variety of economic, social and/or psychological reasons.... It would seem logical to assume that...creative and effective credentialing programs exist to serve their needs. Sadly, this is not the case....Tradition and habit have discouraged creative alternatives.[1]

In August 1978 the Mounds View Community Education Department received a Section 309 Special Project Grant (under Title III of the Adult Education Act) from the Minnesota State Department of Education for a three-year demonstration project entitled "A Competency-Based Skills Curriculum Model--An Alternative Approach to Adult Basic and Continuing Education." The purpose of the project was to "develop a model whereby adults [could] earn a high school diploma from a school district by demonstrating competencies acquired through previous education and life experiences in addition to participating in an instructional program in basic skill areas and life skills."[2]

The Mounds View project, which became known as ADVANCE (Adult Diploma Validating and Accrediting Necessary Competencies and Experiences), received Special Demonstration Project funds in FY79 and FY80; however, the project was not selected for funding beyond September 1 in the third fiscal year (FY81). The reasons given for not continuing project funding were the overall cost of the program, the cost of replication, the limited population served by ADVANCE and concern about the commitment for future funding from the Mounds View School District. The decision not to fund ADVANCE was based on the

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[1]Nickse, Ruth S. Assessing Life-Skills Competence. Pitman Learning, Inc., Belmont, California, 1980, p. xi.

[2]"Application for Funding a Special Experimental Demonstration Project or a Teacher Training Project," submitted by Mounds View Community Education Department to the Minnesota Department of Education, August 7, 1978, p. 1.

perception of ADVANCE's limited potential in the development of a statewide adult basic and continuing education delivery system rather than a concern about the program's quality.[3]

In September 1980 the assistant coordinator of Mounds View Adult Special Programs wrote to the assistant commissioner, Division of Instruction, Minnesota Department of Education, to request funds for a formal evaluation of the ADVANCE Project. The assistant commissioner approved the request and committed funds for an external evaluator to conduct the evaluation. The assistant commissioner indicated that the evaluation design was to be a joint responsibility of the external evaluator, the Minnesota coordinator of Adult Basic Education and the assistant coordinator of Mounds View Adult Special Programs.

Research Purpose and Methodology

With respect to the purpose of the evaluation, the assistant commissioner specified that:

> The evaluation design should focus on the impact of the ADVANCE project on students that received a diploma ..and on cost effectiveness to enable informed judgments to be made concerning the desirability of the ADVANCE project for dissemination and its potential for cost effective replication.[4]

The assistant commissioner suggested that in depth interviews be held with ADVANCE graduates and that the following statistical data be collected from ADVANCE files:

1. The number of students that received a high school diploma through participation in the ADVANCE program, the residence of the student and the name of the high school they received the diploma from.

2. For each student that earned a high school diploma through participation in the ADVANCE project indicate:

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[3]Letter from Gerald L. Kleve to Greta Ploetz, August 4, 1980

[4]Letter from Gerald L. Kleve to Greta Ploetz, October 10, 1980.

(a) each credit earned by 'demonstrating competencies acquired through previous education and life experience;'

(b) each credit earned by 'participating in an instructional program in basic skills and life skills;'

(c) time spent in the program, date of entry, date of completion and attendance record.

3. How are the students selected for the ADVANCE project? What are the other options?

4. Identify staff who have been involved in the project; length of time in project, reimbursement to each staff person, source of funds.

5. What parts of the ADVANCE project are unique to the project and what parts are sound adult education practice which are a part of the emerging Minnesota AB/CE program.[5]

The design of the evaluation project to assess the ADVANCE project was drafted by the external evaluator and critiqued and revised through a series of meetings with the state coordinator of Adult Basic Education and the assistant coordinator of Mounds View Adult Special Programs. Evaluation activities included interviews with and a survey of ADVANCE graduates, analysis of graduate files, review of project materials, surveys of current students, program dropouts and Mounds View GED students, and interviews with ADVANCE staff, instructors, assessors of experiential learning and Mounds View School District administrators. To evaluate cost factors related to ADVANCE the State Department of Education conducted a financial audit of the project. The general design of the research project is presented in Table 1.

Graduates. At the time of this study, a total of 34 adults had graduated from ADVANCE. The graduates were sent letters over the signature of ADVANCE instructors informing them of the purposes of the evaluation project. The external evaluator then contacted the graduates by telephone

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[5]Ibid.

Table 1

OUTLINE
ADVANCE RESEARCH PROJECT

Topic	Elements	Methodology/Data Sources
1. Project Development	Description of Project Goals Summary of ADVANCE Model	Review Program Materials Interviews with Project Staff
2. Graduate and Student Demographics	Graduates and Student Demographics Number Enrolled — Residence Age — Handicaps Gender — Reasons for Separation Ethnicity — Employment Status Previous Schooling — Ability Levels (entry/exit) Math, Reading, Writing	Review of Student Files Survey of Students
3. Graduate and Student Enrollment	Recruitment Techniques Selection Criteria/Procedures Options to ADVANCE (GED and Diploma) Reasons for Selecting ADVANCE Student Goals and Aspirations Enrollment/Attendance Patterns Entry/Exit Dates Length of Time in Program Attrition Rates and Reasons High School Awarding Diploma	Review Program Materials Analyze Student Records Interview Graduates and Staff Survey of Current Students
4. Graduate Programs	Profiles of Individual Graduate Programs Summary Statistics for all Programs Experiential Learning Credits Instructional Credits Transfer Credits	Analysis of Student Files
5. Graduates	Satisfaction with Program Post-Graduate Experiences in Employment and Education Impact of Program on Student's Life Contributions to Individual Growth (affective/cognitive) Program Strengths and Weaknesses Evaluation of Program Elements (assessment, advising, testing, instruction) Recommendations for Program Improvement	Graduate Survey/Interviews
6. ADVANCE Staff, Evaluators, Mounds View School District Personnel and Administrators	Functions and Responsibilities Project Strengths/Weaknesses Suggestions for Improvement Commitment to Project Replication and Dissemination Plans for Future	Interviews
7. Costs	Identification of Project Personnel Time in Project Reimbursement Source of Funds Analysis of Development and Operating Costs	State Department of Education
8. Desirability of Dissemination Potential for Cost Effective Replication	Discussion of Costs/Benefits Associated with Dissemination and Replication of ADVANCE Project	Conclusions/Recommendations Based on 1-7 Above

to arrange personal interviews that were held at the Mounds View Community Resource Center. Thirty-one of the 34 graduates (91%) were contacted and voluntarily participated in the study. The three remaining graduates had moved, left no forwarding address and were unable to be reached by phone or mail.

Efforts were made to interview each graduate in a face-to-face setting; however, for a variety of reasons, including work schedules, transportation problems, personal preferences, out-of-state locations and failure to keep scheduled interview appointments, this was not possible. Twenty of the 31 graduates (64%) were interviewed in person, eight (26%) were interviewed by telephone and three (10%) completed survey forms through the mail. The interviews of graduates consisted of three parts--an oral interview, a questionnaire survey and a demographic profile form. The first five graduates interviewed were also asked to comment on the interview format and instruments, based on the graduates' comments, the instruments were modified slightly. The graduate survey form and interview instrument are presented in Appendix A.

Review of Graduates Files. Each graduate's academic file was reviewed to collect information and data on such items as entry/exit dates, program characteristics, previous schooling, experiential learning credits, instructional credits, program materials, test scores and ability levels.

Current Students. Visits were made to two ADVANCE classes to survey currently enrolled students. The survey instruments used were essentially the same as those administered to graduates. Questions not pertinent to current students (e.g., post-graduation experiences) were omitted. Nineteen students participated in the study, 10 from the evening class and nine from the morning class.

Project Staff, Instructors, Evaluators and Other Mounds View Staff.

These interviews focused on the individual's role and responsibility in the project, details of program operations, strengths and weaknesses of project components and benefits-limitations to dissemination and replication. Structured interviews covering these topics were used although interviews were directed to some extent by participant responses and issues raised. A total of 11 people in this category were interviewed, including the project coordinator, two diploma consultants, three instructors, three evaluators of experiential learning and two staff involved with other Mounds View adult programs.

Project Coordinator:	Greta Ploetz
Diploma Consultants:	Sally Bendixen, Betty Waldhauer
Instructors:	Mary Hoffman, Beverly Liebenstein, Debbie Tomczyk
Evaluators:	Pat Blake, Claudia Olson, Al Westfall
Other Staff:	Dennis Rau, Prudence Selden

District and School Administrators. Five Mounds View School District administrators were interviewed concerning the history and development of ADVANCE, attitudes toward the project, the relationship of ADVANCE to other adult programs, the need and demand for alternative adult programs, the credibility of the ADVANCE diploma, the need for project dissemination and replication and the project's future, including district commitment to continuing the program. Those interviewed were:

Karl Brungardt, Principal, Mounds View High School
George Christenson, Acting Superintendent
Paul Donley, Acting Director, Community Education
Gene Edwall, Principal, Irondale High School
John Sedey, Director, Vocational Education

GED Students. Five General Educational Development (GED) students, who elected to participate in GED instead of ADVANCE, were surveyed to ascertain their demographic characteristics, attitudes and opinions, reasons for

choosing the GED over ADVANCE and post-graduation experiences.

ADVANCE Dropouts. In order to determine why some students started but did not complete the ADVANCE Program, ten "dropouts" were interviewed by telephone. These interviews focused on the former students' attitudes toward ADVANCE and their reasons for not completing the program. The files of these students were reviewed to profile their demographic characteristics, academic programs and attendance patterns.

Limitations of Study Design

Although the findings of this evaluation offer important data and information for decision makers, it should be noted that there are also limitations to the study. First, the purpose of the research project was to assess the effectiveness and costs related to the ADVANCE Program so that decisions could be made concerning dissemination and replication. The question of the extent to which ADVANCE fulfilled 309 project goals was not addressed. Moreover, the study focused only on the ADVANCE Program and while a few GED students were interviewed, no attempt was made to assess the relative merits of ADVANCE and other adult programs. Second, the study design centered on ADVANCE graduates, most of whom had been out of the program for several months. Some of the graduates participated in early months of ADVANCE Program while others participated in later months. Given that ADVANCE was a developing program that incorporated minor changes throughout the year, some graduates' comments about program details may not reflect the current model.

A third limitation pertains to the data collection techniques used in the study. Questionnaire surveys and interviews were used and there are inherent strengths and weaknesses in both approaches. The identification of program outcomes and benefits to students were based primarily on subjective

self-reporting by graduates rather than on direct measurement of ability levels or pre- and post-tests. Still another limitation is that the samples of GED students and ADVANCE dropouts were very small and do not yield statistically significant information. These limitations should be observed in the integration and use of this report.

Organization of the Report

In order to provide a conceptual framework and context for reviewing the ADVANCE model, Chapter I presents an overview of factors and events which helped shape ADVANCE. The second chapter summarizes the history and development of ADVANCE and details the ADVANCE model from recruitment through graduation. The background, characteristics and goals of ADVANCE graduates and students are summarized in Chapter III and in Chapter IV each element of the model is evaluated in sequence. Program outcomes and students' post-graduation experiences are also considered in the fourth chapter. Chapter V includes a discussion of dissemination, replication and the cost-effectiveness of the ADVANCE model. The report concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER I

PERSPECTIVE

The ADVANCE Project was not developed in isolation--it was influenced and shaped by a constellation of ideas, assumptions, research, legislation and operational programs at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. This chapter will review the roots of the ADVANCE Program to provide a contextual framework from which ADVANCE can be understood and evaluated.

One of the major influences on the ADVANCE Project was Adult Performance Level (APL) Project conducted from 1971 to 1976 at the University of Texas (Austin). This national study of adult literacy was funded by the U.S. Office of Education through the Adult Education Act (Section 309 Special Project Grant). The APL Project attempted to assess how well adults perform various life tasks that require certain skills (communication, computation, interpersonal relations and problem solving) in areas that have every day application (consumer economics, community resources, health, government and law and occupational knowledge). APL researchers concluded that 20 percent of the total adult population in the United States possessed less than minimal survival skills and another 33 percent had less than proficient survival skills. Conversely, according to the APL researchers, only 47 percent of the adult population were functioning successfully in necessary life skills areas.

The results of the APL study received extensive media coverage, and while the project had many critics, particularly those who questioned the research methodology, the project findings stimulated considerable national interest in adult literacy, performance testing and competence-based education. One outcome of the APL project was that the American College

Testing Service worked with the University of Texas to develop life skills competency measurement instruments. These tests are now available on a nationwide basis. The ADVANCE curriculum, instructional methodologies and assessment and testing programs were greatly influenced by the APL project.

A second major influence on the ADVANCE Project was the increased attention that adult students received in postsecondary education. Following the turmoil on campuses during the 1960s, several prestigious organizations, such as the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the Newman Task Force on Higher Education, criticized colleges and universities for their neglect of adults. Newman characterized colleges as "youth ghettos" which, if they served adults at all, forced adults to fit into structures and learning modes designed for 18-22 year old full-time, residential students. Colleges and universities were also criticized for their lack of attention to career education, an overemphasis on theoretical learning and the neglect of practical applications of learning. The Carnegie and Newman Task Forces, the Commission on Non-Traditional Study and several other groups called for new educational enterprises that would address directly and promptly the perceived shortcomings in postsecondary education.

As a result, nontraditional institutions, such as Metropolitan State University (Minnesota), Empire State College (New York), Community College of Vermont, the New York State Regents External Degree Program and Thomas Edison College (New Jersey), were established explicitly for adult learners. These institutions created innovative delivery systems to meet the needs and interests of employed adults who attend a college on a part-time basis and fostered such concepts as competency-based education, experiential learning, individualized education, community-based education and lifelong education.

Of particular importance to ADVANCE was the increased attention given experiential learning. This concept focuses on the recognition (crediting) of learning outcomes, regardless of the manner in which the learning was achieved. Thus, adult students who have practical experience in a subject area are provided an opportunity to demonstrate that their learning is equivalent to the outcomes of a college course in the subject. If they are successful, the students achieve either advanced placement or advanced standing. This concept, which was introduced to postsecondary education in 1972, was championed by the Council for the Advancement for Experiential Learning (CAEL), a professional organization initiated in 1973 with ten task force institutions. Today CAEL has over 350 members and has identified over 1,000 colleges which provide opportunities for students to earn academic credit for learning acquired through non-collegiate experiences. ADVANCE incorporates many of the concepts and principles developed by CAEL and by colleges having operational assessment programs.

The success of the nontraditional programs mentioned above and the recognition that demographers were projecting a sharp decrease in the number of "college age" students during the last quarter of the twentieth century stimulated many colleges and universities to develop alternative programs designed for adults. Throughout the last half of the 1970s, external degree programs, weekend colleges and other flexible adult-oriented programs proliferated at the baccalaureate and graduate levels. Between 1975 and 1980 college enrollments of students over 35 years old increased by 36.8 percent. By fall 1980 one of three college students was over 25 years old.[6]

Corollary to the increased enrollments of adult students was the

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[6]Magarrell, Jack. "The Enrollment Among Older Americans: One in Three College Students is Now Over 25 Years Old," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Volume 22, Number 11, May 4, 1981, p. 3.

dramatic increase in the number of students who attended college on a part-time basis. In Minnesota, for example, between 1973 and 1978, part-time undergraduate enrollments grew by 55 percent, while full-time enrollment rose by only 9 percent.[7]

Increased participation of adults in postsecondary education stimulated research on adult learning styles and life cycles. This research and the assumptions underlying many operational nontraditional programs yielded hypotheses about adult development and learning styles. Among the hypotheses developed were that for many adults learning is facilitated when (1) there is a clear understanding of the goals to be achieved; (2) the subjects to be learned have direct applicability to everyday life; and (3) adults have a voice in formulating their educational program. The ADVANCE Project incorporated these tenets in its curriculum and instructional design.

Another significant influence on the ADVANCE model was the national demand by legislators, school officials and the public-at-large for "accountability" for publicly supported education programs. For secondary education accountability took many forms, including the establishment of minimal competency testing, outcome oriented or competency-based education, functional literacy requirements and a movement "back to the basics." The ADVANCE model utilizes a competency-based approach to curriculum and sets specific performance objectives for students who work at their own pace to demonstrate outcome behaviors.

The factors noted above, particularly the APL study, stimulated the development of competency-based adult diploma programs throughout the United States. The prototypical nontraditional adult high school program is New

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[7]Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board, Post-Secondary Education for Part-Time and Returning Students, March 20, 1981, p. 6.

York State's External High School Diploma Program which is a non-instructional program that enables adults to attain a diploma through the use of community resources and demonstrated competencies. The program has been replicated in five sites within New York State as well as in the states of Maryland and Wisconsin. Other highly visible adult programs are in Texas, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Oregon. One source indicates that there now are over 150 projects in 43 states which stress life skills and functional literacy.[8] Program details vary, often in response to state guidelines or requirements; however, these alternative programs for adults have many elements in common including the following:

1. an emphasis on life-skills content,
2. recognition of experiential learning;
3. personal, individualized support system;
4. decreased emphasis on direct, group oriented, classroom teaching;
5. flexible time schedules
6. continuous feedback to students;
7. performance-based evaluation.

A comparison of the ADVANCE Project with four other nontraditional adult diploma programs is presented in Appendix B. The next chapter of this report will review the development of the ADVANCE Project and the details of the operational model.

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[8]Parker, James T. and Paul G. Taylor, The Delphi Survey, CBE Forum, Fearon Pitman Publishers, Inc., Belmont, California, p. 14.

CHAPTER II

THE ADVANCE MODEL

History and Development

Assumptions inherent in the Mounds View Community Education Department's proposal for the ADVANCE Project were:

1. that in addition to academic skills, such as reading and math, there are life skills or competencies which help adults to function independently;

2. that adults can learn and achieve competence through life experiences and that such learning should be creditable toward a high school diploma;

3. that adult learning is facilitated when it is directly applicable to life problems;

4. that experienced, mature adults are not adequately served by time-based diploma programs.

Mounds View's proposal promised to "develop a model whereby adults [could] earn a high school diploma from a school district by demonstrating competencies acquired through previous education and life experiences in addition to participating in an instructional program in basic skill areas and life skills."[9]

The specific goals of the Mounds View Project were:

1. to significantly increase the number of people who can achieve a high school diploma, in a time frame consistent with adult needs and in a setting which gives credit for adult learning gained through specific life experiences;

2. to assist adults in improving their basic skills so that they may develop functional abilities to meet present needs and to cope more successfully with unpredictable circumstances in the future.

Because the Mounds View proposal was to develop one of the first alternative high school diploma programs for adults in Minnesota, dissemination activities were planned for the third year of the project.

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[9]"Application for Funding a Special Experimental Demonstration Project or Teacher Training Project," 1978, p.1.

The Mounds View Community Education Department's proposal was formally funded in late August 1978. During the next nine months, staff were employed. teacher in-service training sessions were conducted, and the ADVANCE model was developed with the assistance of staff, Mounds View School District faculty and local and national external consultants. The first students were admitted to ADVANCE in September 1979.

Similar to other new, experimental programs, the ADVANCE model has not been static. While the basic assumptions underlying the program remain unchanged, the model has evolved through a series of changes as ADVANCE staff and faculty gained experience in utilizing and testing the model's concepts, materials and curriculum.

Description of the Model

Program Philosophy. The assumptions and educational philosophy underlying the ADVANCE model have been described above. The ADVANCE Program defines competency-based education as "a system of helping men and women to acquire those competencies which are needed to function independently and confidently in society and to assume the complex responsibilities of an adult." The objective of competency-based education is the development of a core of life and academic skills that increase the individual's capacity to function effectively in diverse adult roles, such as consumer, worker, parent and citizen.

Program Requirements. The ADVANCE Program has four basic requirements:

1. Participation in ADVANCE for a minimum of three months;[10]
2. Demonstration of competency in three areas of basic skills--math, reading and writing;

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[10]This minimum attendance requirement initially applied to all ADVANCE students. With the permission of the supervisor of secondary education, the requirement can now be waived for exceptional students who meet all diploma requirements in a shorter period of time.

3. Demonstration of competency in five Adult Performance Level life skills areas:

Government and Law	Community Resources
Health	Consumer Economics
Occupational Knowledge	

4. Demonstration of competency or the completion of course work in:

English	(3 credits)
Social Studies	(3 credits)
Mathematics	(1 credit)
Physical Education/Health	(1 credit)

7 Electives

For the seven electives, eleven categories of life experience learning can be used:

Employment	Practical Arts
Training Programs	Sports/Recreation/Travel
Military Service	Volunteer Experiences
Home Management	Independent Studies
Family Health Care and Education	Fine Arts
Second Languages	

Students may satisfy program requirements through a combination of (1) transfer credits from high schools previously attended; (2) documentation and evaluation of experiential learning; and (3) completing the individualized competency-based courses in the ADVANCE curriculum. Transwer credits may include both required and elective credits; experiential learning credits are limited to electives and the instructional courses can be used for both required and elective credits.

Program Staffing. In 1979-80, ADVANCE Project staff consisted of the assistant coordinator of Mounds View adult program; coordinator, two part-time diploma consultants and three classroom instructors. The hours staff worked in ADVANCE varied from week to week; however, in general the assistant coordinator and the two diploma consultants each worked about 20 hours a week on ADVANCE activities. The assistant coordinator, who also carried responsibilities for all other adult programs, worked with diploma consultants in

project development, writing curriculum, establishing the assessment program, developing mastery tests and planning and conducting student recruitment. Diploma consultants had primary responsibility for orienting all students entering the Mounds View Community Education Adult Programs, including ADVANCE. They also had primary responsibility for the assessment of experiential learning, personal counseling and advising of adult education students and the development of ADVANCE students' individualized action plans. The three teachers assisted in the development and field testing of curriculum materials and worked with students on an individual basis in the classroom. Teachers worked a combined total of 38 hours per week (two worked 16 hours each and the third worked six hours).

During the current academic year, FY81, budget limitations caused staffing for ADVANCE to be cut back. The ADVANCE Project is now staffed by the assistant coordinator of adult programs (20 hours per week), one diploma consultant (20 hours per week) and one instructor (29 total hours--26 hours for instruction, 2 hours for consultation and 1 hour for curriculum development).

Program Format. The ADVANCE model has five basic steps: (1) orientation and placement; (2) development of individualized student action plan; (3) assessment; (4) instruction; and (5) review of portfolio. Each of these components of the ADVANCE model will be described below. Evaluation of each component is considered in Chapter IV.

Orientation and Placement. Individuals interested in any Mounds View Adult Education Program (Adult Basic Education, GED, English as a Second Language, ADVANCE) are invited to attend a regularly scheduled orientation meeting which is conducted by the diploma consultant. For those who cannot attend or prefer not to attend the group session, orientation is also available

through an individual appointment or on a drop-in basis. At the orientation, all program options, requirements and expectations are explained and discussed. Students interested in enrolling in any of the programs complete the registration form and also take placement tests in reading and math.[11] The reading test used for placement was the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE II) although for a brief period the Gates-McGinitie test was used. The ABLE II test is geared to grades 5-9. The 33-item math placement test is a locally developed exam of basic concepts. The purpose of the reading and math tests is to get a "ballpark estimate" of an individual's skills.

Students selecting the ADVANCE option take a third test, the APL Survey, which assesses the individual's abilities in facts and terms, communication, reading, writing and problem solving. The APL Survey is a 40-item test which is a general indicator of the individual's competence in the five APL content areas (consumer economics, community resources, health, government and law and occupational knowledge). The survey attempts to measure the student's ability to do everyday tasks such as reading a map, addressing an envelope and reading a bus schedule. The reading, math and APL Survey tests generally take an hour and a half to two hours to complete.[12]

Criteria for Admission to ADVANCE. Among the criteria for admitting students to the ADVANCE Program are: (1) student preferences; (2) ability levels; (3) student goals; (4) educational background and other experiences; (5) age (in 1979-80 the age requirement for ADVANCE was 22; the age limit was lowered to 21 for the current academic year); and (6) student time

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[11] Students are encouraged to take the placement tests but the tests are not required. Students who do not take the placement tests are assessed through interviews with instructors.

[12] For a very brief period of time ADVANCE students also completed an affective self-assessment test (Ardyth Norem-Hebeisen, 1977) that was to be administered on a pre- and post-ADVANCE basis. The test was discontinued due to a lack of time for interpreting results and following-up with students.

restrictions.[13] As noted above, ADVANCE is intended to complement rather than supplant other adult education programs. Students who have basic skill deficiencies (e.g., reading level below 6th grade) but who want to participate in the ADVANCE Program, are first placed in the Adult Basic Education Program and as skills improve can move directly into ADVANCE.

Development of Individualized Student Action Plan. Within one or two days of the initial orientation program, students selecting ADVANCE meet with a diploma consultant on a one-to-one basis. The purposes of this meeting are to review placement tests results, discuss barriers to participation (e.g., health, transportation or child care problems), review credits previously earned at other high schools and discuss the student's prior learning experiences. This individual appointment is also used to discuss the particular student's goals and to develop an individualized student action plan, based on the student's needs, goals, transfer credits, prior learning experiences and program requirements. The form used to summarize the student's action plan is presented in Appendix C.

Assessment of Experiential Learning. As explained above, students may use experiential learning derived from such activities as work, home management, military service, volunteer service, and hobbies to satisfy elective credits. To receive credit, students must demonstrate that their experiential learning is equivalent or comparable to the outcome expected of high school students completing courses in the subject area. The diploma consultant assists the student in identifying and documenting experiential learning. The life experience categories which may be used for elective credits and the maximum amount of credit in each category are presented in Exhibit 1.

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[13] Some students on public assistance had a specific period of time within which they had to complete a diploma or GED. The length of time available to the student influenced whether he/she would enroll in ADVANCE.

Exhibit 1

CATEGORIES OF LIFE EXPERIENCE/ELECTIVE CREDITS

In each category the maximum amount of credit a student may earn is shown in parentheses.

1. Employment includes activities for which a person is paid. (4 credits) (In assigning credit, skill level, scope of job responsibility, training, and promotions will be considered as well as time spent on the job.)

2. Training Programs include non-paid internships, apprenticeships, and in-service trainings. (2 credits)

3. Military or Alternative Service one year in service will be awarded. (1 credit)

4. Home Management includes those activities that contribute to the successful running of a home, such as: food preparation, budgeting, purchasing, home maintenance and repair, etc. (4 credits)

5. Family Health, Care and Education includes those activities that contribute to the mental and physical well-being and growth of children and other family members. (2 credits)

6. Proficiency in a Second Language includes competency in speaking and understanding a spoken and written foreign language. (2 credits)

7. Proficiency in the Fine Arts includes competency in dancing, music, literature, drama, painting, sculpture, etc. (3 credits)

8. Proficiency in the Practical Arts includes competency in weaving, ceramics, clothing construction and design, carpentry, furniture restoration, and needlework. (2 credits)

9. Community Volunteer Experience includes volunteer work in community, youth, church, hospital, and political organizations (i.e., P.T.A., Jr. Achievement, Little League, etc.) (2 credits) (In assigning credit, skill level and scope of activities that contribute to community life will be considered.)

10. Sports, Recreation and Travel includes activities such as nature study, camping, individual and team sports, historic tours, or any other leisure time activities pursued for the purpose of personal enrichment and enjoyment. (1 credit)

11. Independent Study or Projects includes research, reading, viewing, conferring with experts, planning etc., leading to and culminating in a product such as a comprehensive retirement plan or an independent business operation, etc.. (2 credits)

For each life experience competence the student seeks to demonstrate, he or she must complete, together with the diploma consultant, a competency statement form which specifies the competency achieved, the components of the competency, the measurement techniques used to evaluate the competency and the name of the evaluator. A sample competency statement form appears in Appendix C. Students may demonstrate or document competencies in several ways, including the following:

1. documents - transcripts, certificates, military records, letters, pictures, job descriptions, newspaper articles, etc.;
2. products - samples of student work, such as sewing, carpentry, work reports, etc.;
3. interviews - face-to-face conversation with an expert in the competence area;
4. on-site assessment - a visit by an evaluator to the student's work place, home or other setting in which a situational observation could be made;
5. presentation - a demonstration or performance given to the ADVANCE class;
6. write-ups - written descriptions of the competence;
7. formal tests;
8. simulations.

To demonstrate a competency, students must satisfactorily complete two of the above evaluation methodologies. The diploma consultant assists the student throughout the assessment process and sometimes acts as the evaluator of the student's experiential learning. External consultants who are considered expert in a particular subject area are also used to evaluate student learning. Such community-based experts volunteer their time to the ADVANCE Program. ADVANCE Guidelines for Identifying and Assessing Experiential Learning are presented in Appendix D.

Curriculum and Instruction. To develop a competency-based curriculum,

the ADVANCE staff considered adult student needs, Mounds View District requirements and State Department of Education guidelines. District high school teachers were consulted in order to identify competencies that were comparable to those expected in the regular high school program. External consultants also contributed to the development of the ADVANCE curriculum. The goal of the competency-based curriculum is to "provide learning experiences which will enable adults to meet their educational and personal goals and to function successfully in a variety of life roles and situations."[14]

The content areas for instruction include English (reading, literature and writing), social studies, mathematics, science, health and physical education. The curriculum for each ADVANCE course includes a statement of general objectives, a list of modular objectives, a checklist of activities for students and for instructors and a bibliography of resources on the particular subject. Courses developed for the ADVANCE Project and their credit equivalence are presented in Table 2.

The ADVANCE curriculum is outcome-based rather than time-based. Students proceed through the course on an individual basis by working at their own pace to complete performance objectives. The student is made well aware of the competencies to be achieved, the tasks to be performed and the measurement techniques to be used. Throughout the curriculum, efforts are made to emphasize the practical applications of basic and life skill competencies to everyday situations. The curriculum is flexible in that students may enter a course at any point and, in addition, students may, if they so desire, pursue a topic of interest well beyond minimum requirements.

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[14]Mounds View Community Education, ADVANCE Diploma Project: Curriculum and Assessment Process (p. 1).

Table 2

CREDIT VALUE FOR
ADVANCE INSTRUCTIONAL COURSES

Course	Credit Value
English	3
Reading for Adult Living	1
Adult Literature	1
Writing Skills	1
Practical Writing for Adults (.5)	
Writing Language Effectively (.5)	
Social Studies	3
American History: Our Heritage from the Past	.5
American Government and Law	.5
Issues in the World Today	1
The World of Work: Occupational Knowledge	.5
The Community as a Resource	.5
Economics for the Consumer	.5
Mathematics	1
Science	1
Health	.5
Physical Education	.5

Students demonstrate competency in ADVANCE courses through mastery tests, product evaluations or performance tests. Most of the tests used in the program were developed by the ADVANCE staff although the standardized APL tests developed by the American College Testing Program and the University of Texas are used in the social studies and health areas.

In 1979-80, there were three ADVANCE class sessions--morning, afternoon and evening. During the 1980-81 academic year, there were only two sessions--one in the morning and one in the evening. Instructor hours were reduced from 38 in 1979-80 to 29 in 1980-81. A typical ADVANCE class usually involved 10 to 15 students who were working at their own pace on individual assignments. There are no time limits for completing ADVANCE courses. Most students work on their own but some work in two's and three's. Peer tutoring is not uncommon. The instructor responds to student requests for assistance and when there are no questions she moves from student to student checking progress and reviewing work. Group instructional sessions are held occasionally, particularly in an area such as math, English or government and law where several students may be wrestling with the same concept. During ADVANCE's first year of operation (1979-80) classes were held in a self-contained room separate from other adult education students. During the current year, ADVANCE students are in the same classroom as GED, ABE and other adult education students.

Portfolio Review Committee. When a student has completed the requirements for the diploma, his or her portfolio is reviewed by a panel of three to six members of the ADVANCE Advisory Committee.[15] The purpose of the

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[15]During 1978-79 an advisory committee was established for the ADVANCE Project. The committee was composed of representatives from area high schools, the Community Education Advisory Council, business, social service agencies, community colleges and the general public and its purpose was to provide feedback to project staff on the development and implementation of the ADVANCE Project. The advisory committee also assisted in portfolio reviews and periodic evaluations of program components, such as assessment and instruction.

Portfolio Review Committee is to critique the student plan, to assess the ADVANCE process, evaluate student work and provide oral feedback to ADVANCE staff concerning the quality of the student's program.

Award of Diploma. Diplomas for ADVANCE graduates are awarded through either Irondale or Mounds View High School. The high school which awards the diploma usually is dependent upon the preference of the student. Prior to the award of the diploma, the student's transcript is reviewed and critiqued by the principal of the high school granting the diploma. Graduation ceremonies are held annually in June.

CHAPTER III

GRADUATE AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter summarizes the demographic characteristics of ADVANCE graduates and current students, their educational background, reasons for enrolling in ADVANCE and educational and career goals. Because of the objectives of the study, in this chapter and throughout this report, primary emphasis is given to graduates rather than current students.

Enrollment History

Students were first admitted to ADVANCE in September 1979. During the first two operating years a total of 139 students enrolled in ADVANCE--61 in FY80 and 78 in FY81. Of the first group of students, 33 (54%) earned a diploma, 3 (5%) participated in ADVANCE but later transferred to GED, and 25 (41%) did not complete the program. ADVANCE staff have kept in touch with those who did not complete the program and 13 of the 25 plan to re-enroll in the near future. The results of a sample of ADVANCE dropouts are presented in Chapter IV. As of June 1981 ADVANCE had graduated a total of 57 students. The enrollment status of ADVANCE students is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

ADVANCE ENROLLMENTS
FY80 AND FY81

	FY80	FY81	TOTAL N	TOTAL %
Graduates	33*	24	57	41%
Transferred to GED	3	6	9	6
Still Active in Program	0	33	33	24
Inactive	25	15	40	29
Total Admitted	61	78	139	100%

*Twenty-four of the students graduated in FY80; 9 additional students who entered in FY80 graduated in FY81.

Characteristics, Educational Background and Goals

Demographic Characteristics. Of the first 34 ADVANCE graduates, 28 (82%) were women and 6 (18%) were men. Among current (FY81) students, women composed 62 percent of the total and men 38 percent. Only one of the initial graduates was a minority group member. The sample current students included two (11%) minorities.

The median age of graduates when they first entered the ADVANCE Program was 29.5, although ages ranged from 21 to 62 years. The median age of the sample of current students was slightly lower (28.8) and the range was from 21 to 37. In terms of marital status, 44 percent of the graduates were married, 36 percent divorced or separated and 17 percent were single. One graduate (3%) was widowed. Among the current students, 58 percent were married, 21 percent divorced or separated and 21 percent single.

Eleven of the 19 current students were employed and each of these students worked 30 hours or more per week. The median family income reported by current students was $10,500. About half the graduates and 75 percent of the current students lived in the Mounds View School District.

Educational Background. Five (16%) of the ADVANCE graduates had never previously attended high school. Of those who had attended, half had been out of school for eleven years or longer. The number of years graduates were out of school ranged from three to 45 years. The median number of credits transferred into the ADVANCE Program was eight and the range was from zero to 12.5 credits.

A summary of ADVANCE participants' characteristics is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

GRADUATE AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

	Graduates	Students	Totals	Percentage
GENDER				
Female	28	33	61	70%
Male	6	20	26	30
	34	53	87	100%
ETHNICITY				
Black, Non-Hispanic	1	0	1	2
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	1	1	2
Hispanic	0	1	1	2
White, Non-Hispanic	35	15	50	91
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	2	2	3
	36	19	55	100%
MARITAL STATUS				
Married	16	11	27	49
Single	6	4	10	16
Widowed/Divorced	14	4	18	35
	36	19	55	100%
AGE AT ENTRY				
21-25	10	5	15	27
26-30	10	6	16	29
31-35	6	6	12	22
36-40	3	1	4	7
41-45	2	0	2	3
46-50	2	0	2	3
51-55	1	0	1	2
56-60	1	0	1	2
61-65	1	0	1	2
No Answer	0	1	1	3
	36	19	55	100%
YEARS SINCE LAST ENROLLED IN HIGH SCHOOL				
1- 2	0	0		
3- 4	2	2		
5- 6	2	3		
7- 8	8	1		
9-10	5	2		
11-15	6	3		
16-20	3	3		
21 or more	5	1		
Never Attended	5	2		
No Answer	0	2		
	36	19		
EMPLOYMENT - HOURS PER WEEK				
Not Employed	14	8		
1-10	1	0		
11-20	0	0		
21-30	4	0		
31-40	6	7		
41 or more	6	4		
Retired	1	0		
	32*	19		
FAMILY INCOME				
None	0	0		
Under 2,999	3	0		
3,000- 5,999	5	4		
6,000- 8,999	2	2		
9,000-11,999	2	3		
12,000-14,999	5	3		
15,000-19,999	4	0		
20,000-29,999	7	3		
30,000 or more	3	1		
No Answer	2	3		
	33	19		

*Represents graduates' current employment status.

RESIDENCE OF GRADUATES

Minneapolis	5
New Brighton	5
Fridley	3
St. Paul	3
New Hope	2
Brooklyn Park	2

Each of the following cities/towns had one graduate:

Blaine	East Bethel	Spring Lake Park
Brooklyn Center	Mound	St. Anthony
Columbia Heights	Mounds View	Stillwater
Coon Rapids	Plymouth	White Bear Lake
Corcoran	Shoreview	

Reasons for Returning to School

The reasons given by ADVANCE graduates for deciding to return to school to complete their high school programs were quite diverse. Most graduates indicated that they always wanted to complete their diploma and because they had never completed it they had a poor self-concept, low self-esteem and felt that "something was missing." In almost all cases, the decision to return to school involved both the motivation to complete the diploma and a specific goal related to career entry, career advancement or further education. Most of the students recognized that the lack of a high school diploma was blocking the attainment of a particular goal; thus, the career and educational interests of students seemed to be stronger motivating factors than the "personal desire to achieve a diploma." Specific reasons given for deciding to return to school were not surprising except that four graduates mentioned that the primary motive for their enrollment was to demonstrate to brothers, sisters or children the importance of a diploma in order to encourage them to persist in high school. One graduate had previously completed the GED but enrolled in ADVANCE to earn the diploma in order to qualify for the Navy.

Twenty-six of the 31 ADVANCE graduates had not previously enrolled in a GED or adult diploma program. The six students who had experience in other programs all participated in GED; none had previously enrolled in an adult educational program. One of the four students had successfully completed the GED; the three other students had each passed some but not all of the GED tests. The most frequently cited reasons given by ADVANCE graduates for never completing the high school program earlier were family responsibilities, work commitments, no need for a diploma and lack of confidence due to failures in previous educational experiences.

Participants in the study were asked directly whether the orientation program had provided sufficient information about the ADVANCE Program and the alternatives to ADVANCE, such as the GED and adult education program. Each graduate and each student reported that all options were explained and that they did not feel any pressure to enroll in one program or another.

Graduates and students both indicated that the primary attraction of the ADVANCE Program was the opportunity to earn a diploma rather than an "equivalency certificate." The GED was viewed by both graduates and students as a second class credential that was "not the real thing" and not very well respected by peers, employers and others. Some ADVANCE participants felt that the GED was the "easy way out" while others were put off somewhat by the format of the GED testing program. As will be explained later, ADVANCE participants developed an esprit de corps, somewhat similar to a "Hawthorne Effect" of being in a special program. Although this may have affected the ADVANCE participants' perceptions of the relative value of the diploma and GED, there was clear evidence that basic attitudes toward the GED were formed before their enrollment in ADVANCE.

A second reason participants gave for choosing ADVANCE over the GED was that they recognized that their goals (further education, career entry) required improvement of basic skills (reading, writing and math) and they believed ADVANCE would enable them to learn more in these areas than the GED program. Other reasons given for selecting ADVANCE were that "I wanted to learn and to study a variety of subjects" and "ADVANCE just sounded like it was best for me."

Objectives. Graduates were also asked through the survey form to indicate the objectives they hoped to attain when they first entered the ADVANCE Program. Objectives reported to be most important were: (1) to satisfy my personal desire to have a high school diploma, (2) to obtain a diploma to prepare for further schooling, (3) to develop a new career,

(4) to increase my general knowledge and (5) to improve my basic skills (reading, mathematics and writing). Goals that did not seem important to ADVANCE graduates were "to solve the hard problems of my life" and "to improve my chances for increased pay and/or promotion on my job." The rank order responses of graduates and current students are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5

GRADUATE AND STUDENT RANK ORDER
OF IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS OBJECTIVES
AT ENTRY TO ADVANCE PROGRAM

Graduate (n=31)	Current Student (n=19)	
3	3	a. To develop new career.
8	10	b. To acquire specific skills that will be useful on a job.
6	9	c. To satisfy diploma requirements for a job.
2	8	d. To obtain a diploma to prepare for further schooling.
10	11	e. To improve my chances for increased pay and/or promotion on my job.
1	2	f. To satisfy my personal desire to have a high school diploma.
7	5	g. To develop my personal interests and abilities.
5	6	h. To improve my basic skills (reading, mathematics and writing).
9	7	i. To improve my life skills (knowing about occupations, health, government).
4	1	j. To increase my general knowledge.
11	4	k. To improve my study skills.
12	12	l. To solve the hard problems in my life.

Within this perspective of participants' backgrounds, characteristics and goals, the next chapter will evaluate each of the elements of the ADVANCE model.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF MODEL

Recruitment

Publicity about the program and recruitment of students were the responsibilities of the project coordinator and diploma consultants. Diverse methods were used to make the availability of the ADVANCE Program known. These methods included brochures and bulletins from the Mounds View School District, newspaper, radio and television publicity, posters, flyers, informational meetings with community groups and direct mailings. In addition, relationships were established with area businesses and social and educational organizations, such as the Veterans Administration, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Comprehensive Educational and Training Assistance (CETA) Program, the Work Incentive Program (WIN), vocational technical schools and community colleges.

Thirty-three percent of ADVANCE graduates reported that they first learned about the program through a bulletin, flyer or mailing from the Community Resource Center or Mounds View School District. Another 24 percent reported that they learned about the program through a WIN counselor. Twelve percent indicated that they were told about ADVANCE by another student in the program or by a friend or relative. Of the remaining 31 percent of the graduates, no other information or referral source was mentioned by more than two students. Among the other sources mentioned were counselors at other educational organizations or at places of work, military recruiters and counselors at DVR. Two students first learned about the program through the Community Resource Center's general orientation program conducted for all persons interested in adult programs.

Current ADVANCE students reported that the most frequent source of initial information about ADVANCE came by word of mouth from ADVANCE students or graduates or from friends or relatives. The next two most recently cited

sources of information about ADVANCE were community education bulletins and WIN counselors.

Orientation and Diploma Program Planning

Graduates and students reported that they were very satisfied with the orientation program. The sessions were informative, relaxed and informal, and staff were supportive. Students coming to the orientation program are somewhat reluctant, lack self-confidence or are apprehensive about returning to school. The "no pressure" approach taken by staff helped allay student fears.

The most controversial part of the orientation program for students was the battery of placement tests in life skills, math and reading. The perception of many who work with adults returning to college or to high school is that adults are apprehensive and anxious about taking tests, particularly on the first evening of orientation. Interview and survey results indicated that while half the students found the prospect of taking placement tests early in the orientation program somewhat "scary" they discovered that the tests were fair and reasonable and the results, which they discussed with the diploma consultant, were both interesting and useful in helping the student identify strengths and weaknesses. A few students reported that they did not like the placement tests, did not expect them, were not adequately prepared for them or felt "overwhelmed" by the testing on the first day. When interviewed, graduates were almost unanimous in their opinion that the placement tests were constructive and useful. On the questionnaire form completed by graduates, 30 out of 32 (94%) reported that the orientation testing was "very helpful" or "helpful." The two remaining students reported that the tests were "somewhat helpful." None felt that the tests were not at all helpful. ADVANCE graduates typically tested at the 8th and 9th grade reading level. The math and APL-40 tests did not yield grade equivalents or standard scores.

Graduates were very supportive of the individualized diploma planning process. They found the relaxed approach to diploma planning very constructive. They also reported that the diploma planning process helped eliminate confusion about the program and was useful in identifying goals. Three of the graduates reported some confusion over program requirements when ADVANCE first opened; however, these problems seem to have been rectified as project staff gained experience.

The diploma consultants played a key role in the ADVANCE Program and results of the interviews and surveys of graduates and students indicated high satisfaction with their work. Only a few students cited shortcomings of the diploma consultants and, for the most part, these were limited to confusion over program requirements that was experienced early in the project. Diploma consultants were praised by graduates for the support and direction they provided during the orientation and the diploma planning process. Seventeen of the nineteen current students (89%) who completed the survey form rated the diploma consultants to be either "very helpful" or "helpful." Only two judged the diploma consultants to be "somewhat helpful."

In summary, the orientation program seems to be an effective and personal way to introduce adult students to the ADVANCE Program. The diploma consultants are sensitive to the needs and concerns of adults and have developed an orientation program that is perceived by graduates and students as constructive and useful. The orientation placement tests were a concern to some graduates and students but, overall, the tests were evaluated positively. Students and graduates had no substantive suggestions for improving or strengthening the orientation program. Student and graduate evaluation of the elements of the orientation program are summarized in Table 6 below:

Table 6

COMPOSITE OF GRADUATE AND STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF ELEMENTS OF THE ADVANCE ORIENTATION PROGRAM (N=50)

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not At All Helpful
Orientation	50%	40%	10%	0
Placement Testing	60	34	6	0
Program Planning with Consultants and Teachers	66	26	8	0
Diploma Consultants	50	36	14	0

Profile of Student Programs

To receive a diploma through ADVANCE, students must earn 16 credits. The content of individual student diploma programs is determined by student needs, ADVANCE Project requirements, credits transferred from other high schools and the student's experiential learning. Core requirements that are not satisfied by transfer credit must be achieved through ADVANCE instruction. Up to a total of seven elective credits may be satisfied through the demonstration of experiential learning. The "typical" ADVANCE graduate diploma program would consist of approximately 7.5 transfer credits, 5 instructional credits and 3.5 experiential credits. The profile of the first 34 ADVANCE graduates' diploma programs is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

PROFILE OF THE FIRST 34 ADVANCE GRADUATES' DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

Credits	Transfer Credits (No. of Students)	Instructional Credits (No. of Students)	Experiential or Elective Credits (No. of Students)
0	5	0	0
1- 2	0	3	8
3- 4	6	11	12 (median)
5- 6	3	9 (median)	10
7- 8	4 (median)	6	4
9-10	11	5	0
11-12	4	0	0
13-14	1	0	0
15-16	0	0	0
TOTAL STUDENTS	34	34	34

The length of time it took students to complete the ADVANCE Program ranged from five weeks to ten months. ADVANCE initially required a minimum enrollment of three months; however, permission was granted by the supervisor of secondary education to waive the requirement for three students who completed the program in less than three months. The "average" ADVANCE graduate completed the program in five months. Table 8 summarizes the number of months each ADVANCE graduate was enrolled.

Table 8

NUMBER OF MONTHS OF ENROLLMENT
FOR FIRST 34 ADVANCE GRADUATES

Months Enrolled	Number of Graduates	Cumulative Frequency
1 (five weeks)	1	3%
2	2	9
3	7	29
4	6	47
5	6	65
6	1	68
7	4	79
8	2	85
9	3	94
10	2	100

Experiential Learning

An analysis of graduate files indicated that a total of 136.48 experiential learning credits were awarded to the first 34 ADVANCE graduates. The median credit award was 3.5, the mean award was 4.01 and the modal award was 4 credits. A total of 82 assessments of experiential learning were conducted and the most frequent categories of life experience credits were employment, home management and the practical arts. A summary of the number of assessments of each of the life experience categories is presented in Table 9.

Table 9

FREQUENCY OF ASSESSMENTS
IN ADVANCE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
CATEGORIES FOR FIRST 34 GRADUATES

Number of Assessments	Category
28	Employment
16	Home Management
14	Practical Arts
7	Family Health, Care and Education
4	Sports, Recreation and Travel
3	Training Programs
3	Military Service
2	Proficiency in a Second Language
2	Fine Arts
2	Community Volunteer Service
1	Independent Study

An inventory of the subjects assessed for experiential learning credit is presented in Table 10.

Evaluators. To assess student's experiential learning, the ADVANCE Project utilized external evaluators, project staff, instructors and ADVANCE class members. A total of eleven external evaluators assessed the ADVANCE graduates' experiential learning. Of the 82 total assessments, 31 (38%) were conducted by external evaluators who participated in the program on a volunteer basis. The remaining evaluations were conducted by ADVANCE Project staff or instructors. Most of the external evaluators assessed three or fewer competences. Only two external evaluators assessed more than three competencies--one completed six evaluations while the other completed twelve.

Interviews with the two most active external evaluators indicated that they both had previously worked in the Mounds View School District and had knowledge of curriculum in their respective discipline areas. The evaluators were given a brief orientation to the ADVANCE Program by project staff. Efforts were made to identify experiential learning outcomes that were commensurate with but not necessarily the same as outcomes of courses in the

Table 10

INVENTORY OF
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SUBJECTS
ASSESSED FOR ADVANCE GRADUATES
(Number of Graduates=34; Number of Assessments=82)

EMPLOYMENT (Total 28)

- Legal Secretary
- Tool Making
- Cashier
- Waitress (3)
- Farm Work
- Assembly Line (3)
- Catalog Sales Clerk
- Supervision
- Paperhanging
- Management/Supervision
- Warehouseman (Shipping)
- Construction
- Postal Work (2)
- Sales (fabric store)
- Computer Operations
- House Care
- Dry Cleaning (owner)
- House Moving
- Factory Laborer
- Photo Engraver
- Mechanic
- Personnel Technical
- Real Estate Sales

HOME MANAGEMENT (Total 16)

- Food Preparation (12)
- Consumer Skills
- Budgeting
- Preserving Food
- Maintenance

PRACTICAL ARTS (Total 14)

- Furniture Refinishing
- Crocheting (2)
- Needlework/Sewing/Clothing Construction (7)
- Quilt Making
- Woodworking/Painting (2)
- Handcrafts

FAMILY HEALTH, CARE AND EDUCATION (Total 7)

- Parenting (6)
- Teaching Child to Read

SPORTS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL (Total 4)

- Trip Planning (map reading)
- Bowling

TRAINING PROGRAMS (Total 3)

- Accounting - Hennepin Voc-Tech
- Nurses Assistant - Anoka Voc-Tech
- Locksmith - Technical Inst.

MILITARY SERVICE (Total 3)

- Marines
- Navy
- Army

PROFICIENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE (Total 2)

- Polish
- German

FINE ARTS (Total 2)

- Sketching/Painting
- Creative Design

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER SERVICES (Total 2)

- Counseling (Human Services Agency)
- Church Work, Lions Club, Title I Mother

INDEPENDENT STUDY (Total 1)

- Geneology

regular Mounds View High School curriculum. Those interviewed were very supportive of the concept of experiential learning for adult students and felt that the learning demonstrated by ADVANCE students was indeed comparable and, in many instances, superior to that of typical high school graduates.

Evaluation Criteria and Methodology. As described in Chapter III, the assessment of experiential learning process begins when the diploma consultant discusses the diploma program with the individual student. The student's experiential learning is reviewed and, based on the criteria that the ADVANCE staff, instructors and external consultants developed for various competency subjects, a judgment is made concerning the experiential learning credits that should be included in the student's diploma program. ADVANCE staff have developed competency statements and components for over 90 subjects. Approximately 8 to 10 components are listed for each competency. The components represent the behaviors required to demonstrate mastery of the subject. The competencies and components developed by ADVANCE are illustrative; they are not standardized. The competencies written as part of the individualized student plan vary from student to student, although there are common elements. Criteria for evaluating experiential learning were intended to be equivalent to those in the regular high school program.

To achieve a competency, students must demonstrate the learning in two different ways. In the employment category, students must submit letters from employers verifying the student's employment. As a second piece of documentation of an employment-related competency, the student might be required to make a presentation to other ADVANCE class members concerning what the job entails. In the home management area, documentation might include an interview with an external evaluator in addition to an oral presentation to the class, compilation of a book of recipes or pre-

paration of a written paper. It is apparent that care was taken to make the assessment of experiential learning process as non-threatening as possible. The initial screening by the diploma consultant reduced student failure at the evaluation phase. Failure of a competency evaluation was possible but did not occur inasmuch as students who were not able to meet the criteria for a competency simply did more work in order to raise his/her learning to an acceptable level.

ADVANCE students and graduates had mixed opinions about the assessment of experiential learning program. Almost all participants liked the concept of gaining recognition (credit) for experiential learning and felt that this was an attractive aspect of the ADVANCE Program. They were also very satisfied with the non-threatening process used to evaluate their experiential learning.

ADVANCE participants were split on the value of writing competency statements. About half felt that the process of writing competency statements was only for administrative necessity and that it did not contribute to the individual's learning or development. Other participants felt that writing the competency statements and the components of the competency helped make the student more aware of his/her learning and gave insights into one's capabilities.

Those who had experiential learning assessed generally liked the group approach to assessment and stated that they learned a great deal from the oral presentations and written reports required to demonstrate a competency. Several graduates mentioned that the presentations by other students were both instructive and interesting. However, several felt the evaluation process in certain subjects was basically a "show and tell" which resulted in easy credit. Others reported that they worked hard to prepare for their assessments and gained a great deal from the process.

The professional educators interviewed unanimously supported the concept of granting credit for experiential learning. They believed ADVANCE was meeting a real need by providing this option for adults. The evaluators who assessed student competencies were confident that experiential learning outcomes that they evaluated were commensurate with outcomes of high school courses in the same subjects. Most of the professionals interviewed felt that the experiential learning program is still developing and needs to be refined so that evaluation criteria, standards and methodologies are more valid and reliable. Among the suggestions offered for strengthening the assessment program were: (1) use of more external evaluators; (2) development of more effective ways to measure knowledge in academic subjects, such as history and science; and (3) providing readings that focus on the theoretical elements of a subject to complement the student's practical knowledge.

The strengths of the assessment program are that it is providing a unique service to adult students, that the process is personal and supportive, that it is for the most part, following the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning's Principles of Good Practice in Assessment, and that it has gained respect of several administrators who initially opposed the concept. The assessment materials developed to guide students in identifying and documenting experiential learning are also a strength. The aspects of the assessment program that need attention are evaluator selection and training, the need to separate the diploma consultant and evaluator roles and the varying quality in the evaluation of different competencies. An additional concern is that some students apparently do not understand the purpose or value in writing competency statements. A summary of the strengths and areas for improvement in the ADVANCE assessment process are presented below.

Strengths

1. a sensitive staff who understand the need for a personal and supportive assessment process;

2. an individualized planning process which enables the individual student to view experiential learning within the context of previous formal schooling and future educational and career goals;

3. a process that is individualized but builds in peer and group support;

4. the use of oral presentations to class members which provides experience to students in public speaking and oral communication (several students mentioned that their oral presentation was the first time they had ever spoken to a group);

5. assessment materials, such as the instruction to the student and sample competency statements, reduce student anxiety and clarify student understanding of the assessment process.

Areas for Improvement

1. Some students do not understand the relationship between competence-based education and writing competency statements. Ways should be sought to utilize the competency writing process as a learning experience that enables a student to analyze his/her abilities and identify strengths and weaknesses.

2. There is varying quality in the evaluation of different competences. In some areas the documentation and evaluation are valid and appropriate while, in some areas, evaluation appears to be very informal to the extent that approval is pro forma.

3. The assessment program is dependent upon volunteers and while this is not in itself a problem, expansion of the ADVANCE Program will need a more effective volunteer evaluator network so that evaluators are not required to assess student learning in areas in which they are not expert. Several colleges, such as Alverno College in Milwaukee, use panels of volunteers to assess competences. This concept may have some relevance for the ADVANCE Program, particularly since ADVANCE already utilizes a community panel at the end of the student's program.

4. To assure objectivity in the evaluation process the roles of diploma consultant and evaluator should be separated.

Curriculum and Instruction

As noted earlier, the curriculum for the ADVANCE Program was developed primarily by ADVANCE administrative staff and teachers with assistance from area high school personnel and from external consultants. To "field test" the courses ADVANCE staff and instructors implemented the courses and then sought feedback from students. In-service sessions and curriculum review sessions were held frequently to discuss and evaluate the appropriateness of the course content. Once the curriculum was field tested and ADVANCE staff and instructors gained experience in using the curriculum model, changes and modifications were made. Although the core requirements and basic courses have not changed, adjustments to the curriculum have been made throughout the project. The most significant changes occured in the health curriculum which was modified in FY80 to incorporate more current topics, such as drug abuse and nutrition and in the history and social science curriculum modules which were revised in FY81.

Core requirements for the ADVANCE program can be satisfied through either transfer credits or ADVANCE courses. Experiential learning credits are limited to electives. Table 11 indicates how many of the first 34 graduates completed each of the ADVANCE courses.

The research design for this project did not call for a content analysis of the ADVANCE curriculum; rather, curriculum evaluation was based upon the perceptions of those who participated in the study.

Mounds View School District administrators, project staff and teachers were satisfied with the quality of ADVANCE courses. District administrators did not have extensive contact with the ADVANCE curriculum, except at the

Table 11

NUMBER OF GRADUATES
COMPLETING ADVANCE COURSES

	N
English	
Reading for Adult Living	12
Adult Literature	16
Writing Skills Practical Writing for Adults Writing Language Effectively	31
Social Studies	
American History: Our Heritage from the Past	11
American Government and Law	30
Issues in the World Today	9
The World of Work: Occupational Knowledge	21
The Community as a Learning Resource	20
Economics for the Consumer	19
Mathematics	29
Science	20
Health	23
Physical Education	7

portfolio review committee meetings; however, they felt that the curriculum development process was participative and that the outcomes of ADVANCE courses were commensurate with the outcomes of courses in the regular high school program.

Project staff and teachers recognized that the development of the ADVANCE curriculum is an ongoing process. They felt that the ADVANCE curriculum was satisfactory but individual modules could be strengthened by reducing redundancy and incorporating more current topics in order to make courses more interesting and pertinent to adult learners. Instructors felt that the availability of round table discussions, oral presentations, theme writing and the opportunity to study a range of subjects were important dimensions of ADVANCE instruction and assessment that were not possible through the GED.

Instructors felt that the quality of the ADVANCE curriculum was

commensurate with the GED program and other diploma programs; however, they felt that ADVANCE students typically were highly motivated individuals who could have handled more challenging work. Thus, the level at which the ADVANCE curriculum is geared is somewhat of an issue for instructors. Several graduates also identified the level of instruction as an issue. Although most graduates felt the level of instruction was appropriate, some said the program was too difficult while others thought it was not challenging enough. This finding is not too surprising given the range of backgrounds, experiences and ages of the ADVANCE participants.

Overall, the most difficult element of the program for students was mathematics. The English courses, particularly writing, also presented difficulties for some students. Conversely, health and science were mentioned most frequently as the easiest subjects.

Graduates were asked on the survey form to indicate the extent to which their participation in ADVANCE contributed to their growth in areas related to the program's curriculum. The areas in which graduates reported the most growth were: (1) sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction; (2) understanding my own abilities, skills and interests; (3) basic skills for personal satisfaction and self-confidence; and (4) improved study skills. The areas in which graduates reported little or no change were: (1) parenting; (2) health care; and (3) consumer economics. The results of this question are summarized in Table 12.

Teachers. Each of the three ADVANCE instructors had extensive experience in either or both the GED and Adult Diploma Program. They were attracted to ADVANCE because of its innovative features and challenging opportunities. The instructors were clearly a fundamental strength of the ADVANCE Program. Forty-seven of fifty (94%) respondents rated the

Table 12

GRADUATE PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL GROWTH
AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THEIR
PARTICIPATION IN THE ADVANCE PROGRAM

	A Very Large Amount	A Considerable Amount	A Little	Not At All
a. Basic skills for personal satisfaction and self-confidence	40%	37%	20%	3%
b. Competence in government and law	23	40	30	7
c. Competence in community resources	13	40	44	3
d. Competence in consumer economics	3	40	37	20
e. Competence in parenting	0	10	52	38
f. Competence in occupational knowledge	14	38	34	14
g. Competence in health care	3	21	52	24
h. Competence in mathematics	57	17	23	3
i. Competence in reading	27	33	13	27
j. Competence in writing	35	41	14	10
k. Sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction	87	10	0	3
l. Understanding my own ability, skills and interests	60	27	7	6
m. Ability to express myself	30	30	30	10
n. Improve study skills	33	44	20	3

instructors as either "very helpful" or "helpful." ADVANCE instructors developed special relationships with students and graduates and this was verified through numerous anecdotes reported by graduates during the interview sessions. Several graduates indicated that it was the teacher's encouragement, counseling and support that kept them in the program when they thought about dropping out. Several other graduates mentioned that the teacher's personal concern for them had changed their attitudes toward education and, in particular, toward teachers.

When asked to evaluate the teachers, graduates rated them as outstanding and superlatives were commonly used to describe their performance. Most participants had no complaints about instruction and no substantive suggestions

for improving the teacher's performance. The only shortcomings mentioned concerned the heavy demand on the teacher's time during some class sessions which limited their immediate accessibility to the instructor. A second concern mentioned was the need for improved instruction in math, a subject which many participants found quite difficult.

The teachers themselves found the ADVANCE Program to be very rewarding. They felt that ADVANCE required more diversified tasks and a heavier workload than either the GED or Adult Diploma Program. When asked for suggestions as to how they could be more effective in the program, the teachers recommended that it would be beneficial to separate the math and language arts components so that one person was not responsible for all subjects.

Patterns of Attendance

Class Size. The size of particular class sessions depended upon the time and day of the class. Some classes were at times as small as three while others exceeded 20. Graduates reported that when class size exceeded 15 the teachers were extremely busy answering diverse questions from students who were working at different levels in different subjects. This load meant that, at times, the teacher was not immediately available and that students had to "wait in line" for assistance.

Hours Per Week in Class and Study. Graduates and students were also asked to indicate the amount of hours they spent in class and in study or preparation for class each week. The data reported indicated that ADVANCE participants typically spent nine hours a week in class and about seven hours in out-of-class activities, such as study, completing written assignments and preparing for assessments. These data are summarized in Table 13.

Student Problems. Most ADVANCE students reported that they did not encounter major problems during their enrollment. Problems mentioned as

Table 13

NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK SPENT BY ADVANCE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES IN CLASS AND IN OUT OF CLASS PREPARATION

Hours Each Week	In Class		Out of Class	
	N	%	N	%
0	0	0%	3	6%
1- 5	10	19	16	32
6-10	21	41	18	36
11-15	10	19	4	8
16 or more	11	21	9	18
	52	100%	50	100%

occuring "sometimes" were study skill difficulties, lack of time to study and health problems. Currently enrolled students also reported no major problems, although a few mentioned that they had transportation difficulties. Student and graduate response to the question on enrollment problems are presented in Table 14. When asked to indicate the types of services they needed during their enrollment in ADVANCE, twelve of thirty-four respondents reported that they needed counseling. Eleven of the twelve felt that they had received adequate counseling through ADVANCE.

Table 14

FREQUENCY OF PROBLEMS ADVANCE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES ENCOUNTER DURING ENROLLMENT N=51

	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
a. Health Problems	6%	33%	61%
b. Child Care Problems	6	20	74
c. Transportation Problems	6	23	71
d. Family Problems	8	29	63
e. Class Location Problems	2	4	94
f. Scheduling Problems	4	10	86
g. Study Skill Problems	6	41	53
h. Lack of Time to Study	10	39	51

Relationships Among Students. Students typically arrived early for their classes so that they could have coffee and talk with other ADVANCE students and instructors. Students also took breaks together and frequently stayed after the formal class sessions for social reasons. Students typically worked on their own and proceeded through the individualized curriculum at their own pace. At times, there was a presentation on a particular subject of interest to all students and periodically ADVANCE classes were combined with GED and Adult Diploma classes for a special film or speaker.

Some students worked in groups of two's and three's and progressed through the program together. Upon occasion, informal peer tutoring took place whereby a student facile in a particular subject would help others.

Despite the diversity of their backgrounds, ADVANCE students developed a strong identity with each other and particularly with the program. The feelings among the students were evident in their daily interactions and at the first graduation ceremony where the emotion among the ADVANCE graduates was clearly stronger than that exhibited by graduates of the other adult programs. Among the factors that contributed to the development of this "group" relationship were: (1) the perception that ADVANCE was a special project and that the FY80 students were the pioneers in the program; (2) in FY80 ADVANCE students were in a classroom separate from the other adult programs; and (3) students received considerable attention from program staff, instructors, consultants, visitors and observers. These factors, combined with the aforementioned negative attitude which many ADVANCE participants had toward the GED, caused some resentment of the program by GED participants.

Schools Awarding Diplomas. Students were permitted to choose which high school (Mounds View or Irondale) they wanted to award their diploma.

Of the first 34 graduates, 20 (59%) received their diploma from Mounds View and 14 (41%) from Irondale.

Post-Graduation Experiences

Education. Of the thirty-one ADVANCE graduates interviewed, a total of fifteen were enrolled in postsecondary education. Eleven graduates were enrolled in vocational, technical or trade schools and four were enrolled at community colleges. One of the students enrolled at the community college had recently been accepted in the College of St. Catherine nursing program. In addition, four other ADVANCE graduates mentioned definite starting dates for enrollment in formal education and six others had general plans for enrollment (e.g. "as soon as my baby is older," "following surgery"). Only one of the ADVANCE graduates who had enrolled in postsecondary education had dropped out and that was for medical reasons. ADVANCE graduates reported that they were doing very well in their studies, although one student mentioned difficulties with a mathematics course.

Employment. Sixteen (52%) of the ADVANCE graduates were employed, fourteen others were not employed and one was retired. Only five ADVANCE graduates were neither employed nor enrolled in an educational program. Two ADVANCE graduates were both employed and enrolled in an educational program. Three graduates said that they became employed after receiving their diploma, two reported a promotion because of the diploma and two others said that their diploma enabled them to join the Navy. One of the graduates who joined the Navy had previously earned a GED but reported that the certificate was not acceptable to the Navy and that a diploma was required. Graduates who had used their diploma in an employment-related situation reported that the ADVANCE diploma was accepted by employers without question.

Changes in Objectives. Graduates were asked on the survey form whether their objectives had changed since entering ADVANCE. Fourteen out of thirty-one respondents (45%) reported that their objectives had changed. When asked how their objectives had changed, the most common responses were that ADVANCE had changed their attitudes toward education and had stimulated them as well as gave them the confidence to go on to further education.

Student and Graduate General Evaluation of ADVANCE Program

The response of the graduates to the ADVANCE Program was overwhelmingly positive. They reported that they were happy they participated in the program, that they were very satisfied with the program, that they would have no hesitation in recommending the program to others and that the program had a significant affect on their lives. While graduates had come criticism of certain aspects of the ADVANCE Program, they all felt very strongly that the program was generally excellent and many volunteered that it had changed their lives. Foremost among the ways in which ADVANCE affected graduates was the improvement in self-confidence and self-image. Most of the students entered the ADVANCE Program having failed in previous educational experiences and several graduates reported that they had low self-esteem and lacked a sense of self-worth. ADVANCE seemed to be a very positive experience for each of the graduates and resulted in improvements in both cognitive and affective areas. Below is a sample of statements excerpted from the survey questionnaires and interviews with graduates and students which indicate the participants' depth of feeling for ADVANCE.

- "I feel better about myself and everything else."
- "ADVANCE gave me higher goals in life."
- "My attitudes toward school have changed and I discovered that learning difficult things was not impossible."

- "I just feel better ... I don't have to be quiet when other people talk."
- "ADVANCE was extremely beneficial to my life."
- "ADVANCE was the best time in my whole life. It wasn't like school."
- "ADVANCE helped me prove that I could learn in an educational setting. It was the best way to go for a diploma."
- "I feel better about myself."
- "I was really satisfied but I felt it was too easy. The only things I really learned much about were English and math."
- "ADVANCE was great; I wouldn't have missed it for the world."
- "There was no doubt that I was the absolutely worst student in the history of _____ High School. It was not until I became a student in the ADVANCE Program that I felt I earned any valuable achievements. I have often felt that some semblance of maturity began to arrive at last. I proudly display my diploma - it is the one thing that seems to justify those long years of agony."
- "The program is excellent as is! I am very grateful to the instructors for their support and motivation. I had tried other programs in the past and never received my high school diploma. I doubt that I would have my diploma today were it not for the ADVANCE Program and its dedicated teachers."
- "ADVANCE changed my relationship with my family, previously my family kept me in a glass bowl, ADVANCE changed me completely. My friends have noticed that I am more out-going, more assertive and I am my own person."
- "I thank all of you for giving me a chance I thought I had lost a long time ago."
- "ADVANCE is the best thing that ever happened to me."
- "I thought ADVANCE was terrific."
- "My life is great now ... thank you for my future."

ADVANCE Dropouts

To get another perspective of the ADVANCE Program, 10 adults who began but did not complete the ADVANCE Program were interviewed by telephone. The individuals interviewed were randomly selected from a list of former students.

In terms of demographic characteristics, six of those interviewed were female and four were male. Overall, the 64 percent of the ADVANCE students who dropped out of the program in FY80 were female and 36 percent were male. The interviewees happened to fall into two distinct age categories--half were 24 years old or younger when they entered the ADVANCE Program and half were 35 or older. The median age was 29.5 and the range was from 21-48. All participants in the sample were Caucasian. Three former ADVANCE students had previously completed ninth grade, four completed tenth grade and three completed 11th grade. The time spent in the ADVANCE Program ranged from attending only two times (about six hours) to attending more than two months on a regular basis. Six of the ten former students were enrolled in ADVANCE for less than two weeks.

Despite their limited involvement in the program, the former students were quite positive in their remarks about ADVANCE. Their reasons for choosing ADVANCE over the GED were similar to those of other ADVANCE participants, namely, they preferred the diploma over the GED certificate and they felt they could do the ADVANCE Program in a shorter period of time. When asked what they liked about ADVANCE, the former students most frequently mentioned the teachers, the self-paced format and the opportunity to exercise some choice over courses to be taken. When asked what they did not like about the program, all said that they enjoyed the program and didn't have any particular dislikes. Despite probing by the interviewer, none of the 10 former students interviewed expressed a dislike concerning any aspect of the ADVANCE Program. Several felt they left the program quite early and didn't really know the details of the program operations.

When asked why they did not complete the ADVANCE Program, all respondents gave non-academic reasons for dropping out. Six former students said the primary reason was conflicts with work schedules; two said the primary reason was family difficulties (divorce; child care problems);

another said the reason for discontinuation was health problems; and another said he stopped going to the program because he had moved a great distance from Mounds View. Five of the former students interviewed said they definitely planned to re-enroll in ADVANCE; two indicated that they would probably return to the ADVANCE Program; one said he would complete either the ADVANCE or GED Program and the remaining two had no definite plans to complete their diploma.

GED Students

Telephone interviews with a sample of five GED students were conducted to gain insights into why some adults choose the GED over the ADVANCE. The sample of GED students was limited to those over 21 years old (the minimum age for admission to ADVANCE). The information obtained through these interviews was insightful but limited in value given the very small size of the sample.

Overall, the population of Mounds View GED students were younger, less likely to be employed and had lower family incomes than ADVANCE students. Women comprised of more than 60 percent of GED students over 21 years old.

The GED students reported that their primary motivation for returning to school was "to get a diploma." This was verified through the questionnaire survey which indicated that the primary objectives students had for returning to school were "to satisfy my personal desire to have a high school diploma" and "to obtain a diploma to prepare for further schooling." In general, GED students seemed less certain of their educational and career goals than ADVANCE students.

When asked why they chose the GED over ADVANCE, the most frequently given reasons were that they believed they could do a GED more quickly than ADVANCE and that they were more familiar with the GED concept. Program enrollment data indicated that the GED students took an average of five

months. In addition, ADVANCE students tended to spend more hours each week in class and in home study than the GED students.

The GED students reported that they were very satisfied with the GED Program and, in particular, with their instructors. GED instructors, similar to the ADVANCE instructors, received very strong support from students.

When asked in what areas they improved as a result of their participation in the GED Program, the respondents most frequently cited "mathematics" and a "sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction." All five GED students interviewed said that they would definitely recommend the GED Program to friends and relatives; however, only two of the five GED students interviewed felt that their program had significantly affected their lives. Only one of the five had enrolled in a postsecondary education program and none of the five had experienced any employment changes since completing the GED Program.

In general, while both GED and ADVANCE graduates were satisfied with their respective programs, ADVANCE graduates believed their program had greater impact on their lives than did the GED graduates.

CHAPTER V

DISTRICT COMMITMENT, COSTS AND DISSEMINATION

As noted in the Introduction, the purpose of this evaluation was to assess the impact ADVANCE has had on its graduates and examine the cost-effectiveness of the program to enable informed judgments to be made concerning the desirability of ADVANCE for dissemination and cost-effective replication. This chapter will focus on the Mounds View School District's attitude toward and commitment to ADVANCE, costs associated with the development and implementation of the program and cost-effectiveness issues. The chapter concludes with a discussion of dissemination and replication issues.

District Commitment

Interviews with five Mounds View School District administrators indicated enthusiastic support for the ADVANCE Program. Each of the administrators was knowledgeable about the origin, development, philosophy and general operations of the ADVANCE Program. In general the administrators were not familiar with the details of the ADVANCE Program. Four of the five administrators interviewed had served on the ADVANCE advisory committee, functioned as an evaluator of experiential learning or was a member of the portfolio review committee.

The administrators agreed that the philosophy of ADVANCE was sound, that there was a need for the program in the district, that the program was serving adults who otherwise would not be served, and that the program should be continued. ADVANCE was perceived to be complementary to rather than in competition with the GED or ABE Programs.

Three of the five administrators interviewed said that initially they had concerns and reservations about ADVANCE, especially the experiential learning component. They reported, however, that their reservations

were overcome through their involvement in the program and their review of student programs.

In addition to their own support for the program, the administrators believed that the program was supported by the Mounds View School Board. They felt that district commitment was evidenced by the designation of space in the Community Resource Center and the budget expenditures for a portion of administrative salaries and other operating expenses.

In general, the administrators felt the strengths of the ADVANCE Program were: (1) the program is meeting a real need; (2) the effectiveness of program staff and instructors; and (3) program credibility.

While the administrators recognized that ADVANCE was in only its second year of operation and was still developing, none of those interviewed was aware of any specific or substantive deficiencies in the current program. However, several concerns related to the future of the program were mentioned, including financing, the need for controlled growth, the need to maintain standards, the need to continue to demonstrate program effectiveness, the philosophical differences with the state and the number of staff available for the program.

The above discussion pertains primarily to the district's general support for the ADVANCE concept and operational program. When asked about the district's commitment to financial support for the program, the administrators were less optimistic. The interviews with administrators took place in April 1981, during a legislative session in which there was an unprecedented deficiency in state revenues and there was great uncertainty over school budgets. The Mounds View School District was especially hard hit and administrators were faced with substantial budget cuts which would necessitate retrenchment of both personnel and programs. In addition, the district was to get a new superintendent on July 1, 1981. Thus, given the

severity of impending budget cuts and the uncertainties surrounding the arrival of a new superintendent, district administrators could not give a definitive answer concerning the amount of financial support the ADVANCE Program would receive in FY82. Most felt, however, that despite their own personal support and the district support for the ADVANCE Program, budget constraints would threaten the ADVANCE Program unless state or federal support, similar to that received for the GED and other adult programs, is available.

When asked whether it would be appropriate to disseminate the results of the ADVANCE Project, the administrators were unanimous in their opinion that the level of interest in ADVANCE among adult educators was significant and that dissemination of what has been learned from the ADVANCE Project would be very beneficial.

Costs

As part of the evaluation of the ADVANCE Project, the State Department of Education conducted an audit of Project expenditures for the planning year (FY79) and the first two operating years (FY80 and 81). The audit focused on the distribution of staff time. The special project and local match expenditures for developing and implementing the ADVANCE Project were $30,239.76 in FY79 and $27,470.01 in FY80. In FY81, when ADVANCE received special project funds only through September, the amount received was $2,651.78.

For the next fiscal year, FY82, the coordinator of ADVANCE has projected that a total of 125 students will be enrolled in the program, including 33 "carry-overs" from FY81 and 92 new admissions. The projected budget for FY82, including community education funds, is $29,673. The breakdown of the projected budget is shown below.

Instructors (3)	
One Daytime x 21 hrs/week x $11.50 per hour x 48 weeks	$11,592
Two Evening x 6 hrs/week x $11.50 per hour x 48 weeks	6,624
Diploma Consultant (1)	
15 hours x $11.50 per hour x 48 weeks	8,280
Coordinator (12.5% FTE)	2,029
Instructional Materials and Supplies	1,100
TOTAL	$29,625

These figures do not include several other relevant costs, such as employee fringe benefits, physical plant, utilities and secretarial support. However, overall, if enrollment and budget projections are accurate, it would appear that some economics of scale and program efficiencies are taking effect and that the overall cost per graduate will begin to decline.

Cost-Effectiveness

Analysis of the cost-effectiveness of any educational program, including ADVANCE, is complex, value laden and, in most instances, non-definitive. Through this evaluation and the audit conducted by the State Department of Education extensive data and information have been collected on both cost and effectiveness variables. Although the data and information are important and integral to an assessment of ADVANCE, they do not constitute a sufficient basis on which to draw conclusions about the program's cost-effectiveness. Other dimensions to the cost-effectiveness issue must be considered.

First, cost data must be based on some standard unit of measurement. Cost studies in education, especially higher education, use a full-time equivalent student (FTE) with adjustments made for level as the basic measuring unit. Arriving at a per student cost in ADVANCE is complicated by students' diverse patterns of attendance; for example, one student may complete the program in a few weeks while others may take up to a year and

some students may utilize experiential learning while others may not. Thus, while it is expedient to get a gross cost per student or graduate by summing expenditures and dividing by a student unit, the calculations for ADVANCE are made more complex by the unique patterns of student attendance and the options they have for satisfying program requirements.

A related issue is that the ADVANCE Program has had only two operational years and that to date expenditures have included both developmental and operating costs. The actual cost model for ADVANCE may not be fully developed if economics of scale and operational efficiencies are not yet realized.

Second, cost-effectiveness is normative, that is it must be compared to some established standard or criterion. To adequately judge the cost-effectiveness of ADVANCE comparable data should be available on similar or parallel programs, such as the GED, adult diploma or the regular high school program.

A third issue to be considered is "opportunity costs."[16] ADVANCE was achieved through the use of scarce resources and the real costs of the project must reflect the alternative uses of the funds that were committed to ADVANCE. The underlying question is whether ADVANCE or some alternative use of the same resources produces the greatest results.

A fourth issue concerns program effectiveness. The effectiveness of educational programs must be judged in terms of their results. For the individual student results are usually defined in terms of learning and growth--cognitive, affective and personal development--which affect the individual's ability to function as a citizen, parent, consumer and worker.

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[16] Bowen, Howard R. The Costs of Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1980.

[17] Bowen, Howard R. Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value American Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1977, pp. 359-387.

Dissemination and Replication

A key question in determining whether the ADVANCE Project is desirable for dissemination and replication is "What is unique about ADVANCE?"

In considering this question, it should be kept in mind that ADVANCE is neither a panacea nor nirvana. It is a performance based alternative program for adult students that is intended to supplement rather than supplant other adult education programs. ADVANCE has many strengths but it also has areas that could be strengthened. The relative strengths and areas for improvement have been noted throughout this report. The "model" is still being developed and refined as project staff gain more experience in working with it and all persons interviewed would agree that the model will continue to evolve.

Overall, a fundamental and compelling strength of the program is the exceptional enthusiasm graduates and students had for the program and the staff. Graduates were very satisfied with the program and were effusive in praising ADVANCE for the constructive and positive effects it had on their lives. The graduates' post-ADVANCE activities in education and employment were also very impressive. In addition, the general quality of the program seems good and there do not appear to be any severe problems with the program.

Whether the first graduates were uncommonly motivated and whether ADVANCE can sustain these accomplishments can be debated; however, on the basis of the data and information collected through this study, there is little doubt that ADVANCE has had a significant impact on the lives of the first 31 graduates. The graduates' support for the program and their subsequent educational and work-related accomplishments cannot be easily dismissed.

What is unique about ADVANCE to warrant dissemination? The impact it apparently has had on its graduates is certainly a distinguishing feature.

As for the actual model, ADVANCE seems to be one of the first performance-based adult education programs in Minnesota. As noted earlier, many states have alternative adult diploma programs but Minnesota has only a few. Considerable time and effort has been devoted to developing a performance-based curriculum and given the general interest in the ADVANCE concept, (as evidenced by inquiries from other adult educators) ADVANCE would seem to have some unique and important information to share.

The assessment of experiential learning is also a unique feature of ADVANCE. All of the professional educators interviewed in the study felt that recognition of experiential learning is an important and valid concept for adult education. The ADVANCE Project's approach to assessment, again has shortcomings as well as strengths, but, overall, the project is doing an effective job in implementing and refining the concept at the high school level. ADVANCE's assessment techniques, criterion standards and general approach to assessment would be of interest and importance to many.

Other unique features of ADVANCE are the individual diploma planning process and the flexibility of the curriculum. The diploma planning process provides an opportunity for the student to discuss goals, assess current strengths and deficiencies and exercise some choice about the content and format of his/her education. Through this process students are encouraged to become active, self-directed learners. The performance-based curriculum is unique inasmuch as it attempts to relate the curriculum to practical, everyday problems in adult lives. Moreover, the curriculum is adaptable to the needs of individual students and permits in-depth study of a diversity of subjects. Also, the opportunities for students to write themes, make oral presentations and do independent research seem to be uncommon in most adult education programs.

On the basis of the data collected in this evaluation, particularly

with respect to the impact ADVANCE has had on its graduates, and from a judgment about the overall quality of the program, dissemination of information about the ADVANCE Project is recommended. Program replication or adaptation should be left to the judgment of local school districts.

The alternative to disseminating information about ADVANCE is to ignore the outcomes of a project that has had very good success and which cost over $60,000 to plan and implement. The project's accomplishments, its innovative features, the responsibility to report the results of the 309 Special Project expenditures and the general interest in the program was evidenced by the number of requests Mounds View receives for information about ADVANCE indicate that dissemination is warranted. It would be unfortunate not to share with adult educators what has been learned through the ADVANCE Project, including what worked and what didn't work. Dissemination should be accomplished in such a way that other adult educators can review the ADVANCE Program's philosophy, operational model, materials, strengths and weaknesses to determine for themselves the appropriateness and desirability of the model or components of the model for replication.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

In 1978 the Minnesota State Department of Education awarded a three-year demonstration project grant to the Mounds View Community Education Department to develop a competency-based alternative adult diploma program. The Mounds View Project, ADVANCE, received special demonstration project funds in FY79 and 80 but the project was not selected for funding in its third fiscal year because of the overall cost of the program, the cost of replication, the limited population served by the program and concern about the Mounds View School District's commitment to the program. Following the decision not to provide special project monies in FY81, the Mounds View Community Education Department requested and the State Department of Education approved funds to evaluate the project and determine the desirability of ADVANCE for dissemination and replication. The research study consisted of extensive interviews and surveys of graduates, a review of graduate and student files, and interviews with current students, project staff, other Community Resource Center personnel, experiential learning evaluators and Mounds View School District administrators. In addition, an audit of project expenditures was conducted by the Department of Education.

Findings

Based on the data derived from this study, the following conclusions related to the ADVANCE Program seem warranted:

1. Graduates and current students are very enthusiastic about, supportive of and satisfied with the ADVANCE Program. Graduates reported that ADVANCE has had a positive and constructive impact on their lives. All graduates reported that they would definitely recommend the program to others. The ADVANCE graduates developed a very strong esprit de corps.

2. The reasons ADVANCE graduates decided to return to school to complete their high school programs involved both a strong motivation to complete the diploma and a specific goal related to career entry, career advancement or further education.

3. The primary attractions to the ADVANCE Program were the opportunity to earn a diploma rather than an equivalency certificate.

4. Of the first 34 ADVANCE graduates, 82 percent were women and 18 percent were men. Only one of the initial graduates was a minority group member. The median age of the graduates when they first entered the ADVANCE Program was 29.5 and ages ranged from 21 to 62.

5. The median number of years ADVANCE graduates had been away from formal education was 11 and the range was from three to 45 years.

6. The diploma program of an "average" ADVANCE graduate would consist of 7.5 transfer credits, 5 ADVANCE instructional credits and 3.5 experiential learning credits. The first 31 graduates took an average of five months to complete the program; the range of time for program completion was from five weeks to 10 months. Some students who entered in FY80 but did not graduate until FY81 took much longer.

7. ADVANCE graduates found out about the program primarily through bulletins or other literature from the Mounds View School District and through referrals from WIN counselors.

8. Students were satisfied with the orientation program. Although there was initial anxiety concerning the battery of placement tests, most graduates reported that they found the tests useful and instructive. Other people interviewed had mixed reactions to the placement tests. Some felt the tests were administered too early. Others were not satisfied with the tests used.

9. To gain admission to ADVANCE students had to be reading at a 6th grade level. Most of the graduates were reading at the 8th and 9th grade level at entry.

10. ADVANCE graduates were very supportive of the concept of gaining credit for experiential learning and were pleased with the non-threatening process used to evaluate their experiential learning. Most felt that the written reports and oral presentations required to demonstrate experiential learning competencies were very beneficial. Graduates were split on the value of writing competency statements and several reported that there was a range in the quality of assessments of experiential learning. Professional educators interviewed believed that experiential learning was a valid and important concept for adult education programs. While recognizing that improvements could be made, there was general support for and satisfaction with the ADVANCE experiential learning model.

11. Graduates rated their ADVANCE teachers as outstanding. ADVANCE teachers and graduates developed very close, personal relationships. Graduates reported, however, that when the number of participants in a class reached the 15 to 20 range, accessibility to the teacher was delayed. Teachers found ADVANCE to be challenging and rewarding. There was support for having two instructors--one for mathematics and the other for language arts.

12. Most graduates felt the level of ADVANCE instruction was satisfactory although some said the program was too difficult while a few others thought it was not challenging enough. Overall, the most difficult elements of the curriculum for students were mathematics and English; the least difficult subjects were reported to be health and science.

13. Graduates felt that the areas in which they experienced the most growth as a result of the participation in ADVANCE were: (a) a sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction; (b) understanding one's own abilities, skills and interests; and (c) basic skills for personal satisfaction and self-confidence. The areas in which graduates reported little or no change were: parenting, health care and consumer economics.

14. Of the 31 ADVANCE graduates interviewed, 15 were enrolled in postsecondary education--11 at vocational technical schools and four at area community colleges.

15. Sixteen (52%) of ADVANCE graduates were employed, 14 others were not employed (10 of these were full-time students) and one was retired. Three graduates reported that they became employed after receiving their diploma and two reported a promotion as a result of their diploma.

16. Those who started but did not complete the ADVANCE Program left for personal reasons (health problems, work conflicts) rather than dissatisfaction with ADVANCE. Five of the 10 people interviewed said they definitely planned to re-enroll in ADVANCE.

17. The five GED students interviewed were satisfied with their program and with their teachers. However, ADVANCE graduates clearly believed that their program had a more dramatic impact on their lives than did the GED students.

18. Mounds View administrators were very supportive of the ADVANCE philosophy and operational program. They reported that the program was meeting real needs in a unique and innovative way. They indicated, however, that the severe budget cuts the district was experiencing necessitated that ADVANCE (similar to GED and other adult programs) be dependent upon external (state, federal or private) support.

19. Project expenditures were analyzed by auditors from the State Department of Education and a separate report on the findings of the audit was prepared.

20. The unique and distinctive features of ADVANCE include the individualized diploma planning process, the assessment of experiential learning program and the performance-based curriculum.

Recommendation

This research project focused on the effect the operational ADVANCE Program had on participants. On the basis of the data collected in this evaluation, particularly with respect to the impact ADVANCE has had on its graduates and an assessment of the overall quality of the program, the dissemination of information about the ADVANCE Project is warranted. Program replication is considered to be a decision best left to local school districts.

APPENDIX A

GRADUATE SURVEY FORM AND INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

ADVANCE
SURVEY FORM

1. Name _____

2. As you entered the ADVANCE Program, how important to you was each of the following objectives?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not At All Important
a. To develop a new career	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. To acquire specific skills that will be useful on a job	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. To satisfy diploma requirements for a job	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. To obtain a diploma to prepare for further schooling	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. To improve my chances for increased pay and/or promotion on my job	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. To satisfy my personal desire to have a high school diploma	( )	( )	( )	( )
g. To develop my personal interests and abilities	( )	( )	( )	( )
h. To improve my basic skills (reading, mathematics and writing)	( )	( )	( )	( )
i. To improve my life skills (knowing about occupations, health, government)	( )	( )	( )	( )
j. To increase my general knowledge	( )	( )	( )	( )
k. To improve my study skills	( )	( )	( )	( )
l. To solve the hard problems in my life	( )	( )	( )	( )

3. Have your objectives changed since you entered ADVANCE? ( ) Yes ( ) No If Yes, please explain how they have changed. _____

_____

_____

4. On the average, how many hours each week did you devote to your ADVANCE education both in class and out of class (study)? (Check One for Each)

	None	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 or more
a. Hours in Class	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Hours in Study/Preparation	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

5. Please indicate the extent to which you were helped by each of the elements of the ADVANCE Program.

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not At All Helpful
a. Orientation	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Testing	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Educational Program Planning with Teachers & Consultants	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Writing Competence Statements	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Diploma Consultants	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. Instructors	( )	( )	( )	( )
g. Assessment of Experiential Learning	( )	( )	( )	( )
h. Credit for Experiential Learning	( )	( )	( )	( )

6. During your enrollment in ADVANCE, how often did you encounter the following problems?

	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
a. Health Problems	( )	( )	( )
b. Child Care Problems	( )	( )	( )
c. Transportation	( )	( )	( )
d. Family Problems	( )	( )	( )
e. Class Location Problems	( )	( )	( )
f. Scheduling Problems (time of class)	( )	( )	( )
g. Instruction Met My Needs	( )	( )	( )
h. Study Skills Problems	( )	( )	( )
i. Lack of Time to Study	( )	( )	( )
j. Other (please explain) _____	( )	( )	( )

_____

OVER

7. How much did you improve in each of the following areas as a direct result of your participation in ADVANCE?

	Not At All	A Little	A Considerable Amount	A Very Large Amount
a. Basic skills for personal satisfaction and self-confidence	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Competence in government and law	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Competence in community resources	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Competence in consumer economics	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Competence in parenting	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. Competence in occupational knowledge	( )	( )	( )	( )
g. Competence in health care	( )	( )	( )	( )
h. Competence in mathematics	( )	( )	( )	( )
i. Competence in reading	( )	( )	( )	( )
j. Competence in writing	( )	( )	( )	( )
k. Sense of personal achievement and self-satisfaction	( )	( )	( )	( )
l. Understanding my own ability, skills and interests	( )	( )	( )	( )
m. Ability to express myself	( )	( )	( )	( )
n. Improved study skills	( )	( )	( )	( )

8. Which of the following services did you receive through ADVANCE? (Check Yes or No for Each Item)

	NEEDED		RECEIVED	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
a. Job referral	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Training referral	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Counseling	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Day Care	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Transportation	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. Bilingual instruction	( )	( )	( )	( )
g. ESL instruction	( )	( )	( )	( )
h. Homebased instruction	( )	( )	( )	( )
i. Correspondence instruction	( )	( )	( )	( )

9. Please indicate whether you achieved the following through ADVANCE.

	Yes	No
a. Obtained a high school diploma	( )	( )
b. Passed the GED test	( )	( )
c. Learned English (as a second language)	( )	( )
d. Entered another educational or training program	( )	( )
e. Received U.S. citizenship	( )	( )
f. Increased civic and community awareness	( )	( )
g. Obtained a job	( )	( )
h. Improved salary or job	( )	( )
i. Removed from public assistance	( )	( )

3/5/81

ADVANCE
INTERVIEW FORM

A. BACKGROUND

1. How did you find out about ADVANCE?

2. Why did you decide to return to school?

3. What goals did you hope to accomplish through ADVANCE?

4. Did you ever try to complete your diploma through GED or some other high school program?

5. What kept you from completing your diploma earlier?

6. At the orientation session, did you receive information about alternatives to ADVANCE such as the GED or adult education program?

7. Why did you decide to enroll in ADVANCE instead of the GED or adult education program?

8. What features of ADVANCE were most attractive to you?

9. If ADVANCE was not available, would you have participated in the GED or adult education program? Why or why not?

10. In an earlier question you mentioned some goals you hoped to accomplish through ADVANCE (cite goals). Were these goals accomplished through your participation in ADVANCE?

B. PROGRAM INFORMATION

11. How satisfied were you with the orientation program? Was it useful?

12. Was the testing at orientation useful? Were you at all apprehensive about the tests?

13. Was the individualized diploma planning process (when you and the diploma consultant planned your degree program) beneficial?

14. Was writing the competence statements for learning you gained from life experiences helpful? How? (NOTE: competence statements knows and can apply principles...).

15. How satisfied were you with:

    A. Diploma consultants (Betty and Sally)

    B. Instructors

C. INSTRUCTION

16. Please describe a typical class session.

17. How large were classes

18. Do you work individually or in groups?

19. If the students were each working on different subjects, did the teacher have enough time for students?

20. What subjects were hardest for you?

21. Which were easiest?

D. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (Credit for Life Experiences)

22. In what subjects did you receive credit for life experience learning (e.g., employment, homemaking)?

23. Were there other subjects in which you wanted to be evaluated?

24. How was your learning evaluated?

25. Did you have to write any papers, get verification from employers, etc.?

E. STUDENT PROBLEMS

26. Did you encounter any special problems or difficulties during your enrollment?

27. Were you able to resolve the problems? If so, how?

E. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND POST-GRADUATION

28. Overall, how satisfied are you with the ADVANCE Program?

29. Have you (or would you) recommend ADVANCE to friends and relatives?

30. What affect, if any has ADVANCE had on your life? How is your life different? How is it the same?

31. Did you participation in ADVANCE lead you to seek any employment changes (e.g., becoming employed, promotion, changing careers)? Please explain.

32. Since your completion of the ADVANCE program, have you developed any plans for continuing your education (e.g., non-structured learning, attending college or an AVTI)? (Follow-up: name of colleges attended; performance; adequacy of preparation, areas of study).

F. FINAL COMMENTS

33. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts about your experiences in the ADVANCE Program?

JD/djs
4/14/81

APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF ADVANCE WITH FOUR OTHER NONTRADITIONAL ADULT DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

APPENDIX B
COMPARISON OF FIVE ALTERNATIVE
ADULT DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

Features	NY: External H.S. Diploma Program	TX: APL Competency-Based H.S. Diploma Program	NJ: MAECOM Adult H.S. Program	MA: New Bedford Adult Diploma Program	ADVANCE Diploma Program
Certificate requirements	1. 64 basic skills in communication, computation, and life-skills awareness: in self, social, consumer, science, and occupational preparedness 2. Occupational skills, or college readiness, or special skills	1. Pass Adult Performance (APL test) 2. Demonstrate Life Skills 3. Occupational or post-secondary school readiness; or home management or maintenance	1. 80 credits, including American history 2. 10.5-grade level in reading, math, and English on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)	1. 16 Carnegie units, including American history, (7 required and 9 elective) 2. H.S. level reading grammer, spelling, and writing 3. H.S. level math exam 4. 12-week course or independent study	1. 16 Carnegie units including 9 required and 7 elective. Required competencies include the 5 APL life skill areas and English, social sciences, math and health/physical education 2. Demonstration of competence in 3 basic skills--math, English, reading
Type of instruction	None: use of community resources and family; independent learning with learning prescriptions; self-paced; home learning	All types of instruction: classes, independent: all individual and self-paced; APL curriculum used	All types of instruction: self-instruction; on job; independent; self-paced tutorial; at home	Formal classes; special tutoring; independent learning	Independent study of competence based curriculum; some self-paced tutorial and small group sessions
Type of assessments	Take-home exams; diagnostic exams; self-assessment; oral interviews; applied performance exams; non-secure testing	APL exam; product assessments; performance assessments	Oral and written exams; product and performance assessment	Locally developed exams; documentation of life skills in 11 areas: employment, training program, home management, travel/sports/recreations, family health and education, fine arts, practical arts, volunteering, languages, military, and/or independent project	Locally developed tests for basic competences; broad range of assessment options for experiential learning in 11 areas: employment, training program, home management, travel/sports/recreation, family health and education, fine arts, practical arts, volunteering, languages, military, and/or independent project
Documented type of prior learning	Special skills and occupational skills	Occupational skills and military service	10 credits for work experience; 10 credits for military service; 30 credits for apprentice programs; 5 credits for special skills; 1 or more credits for formal course work	9 credits for life skills options in 11 areas	Up to 7 credits for experiential learning in 11 areas

COMPARISON OF FIVE ALTERNATIVE
ADULT DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

Features	NY: External H.S. Diploma Program	TX:APL Competency-Based H.S. Diploma Program	NJ: MAECOM Adult H.S. Program	MA: New Bedford Adult Diploma Program	ADVANCE Diploma Program
Time and attendance requirements	None	None	None	A minimum of 12 weeks for independent project or a course	Minimum requirement of 3 months; may be waived for some
Age requirements	18 up	17 up	18 up; 16 with waiver	22 up with some exceptions	Originally 22; now 21
Sites used	YMCAs, BOCEs, libraries, churches, learning centers, other sites in community	Adult learning centers, prisons, military bases	Learning centers	Skills centers, adult learning centers, community learning centers, other sites in community	Moundsview community resource center
Portfolio review	Program staff; monitoring by central staff	Program staff; local school monitoring	Local school board	New Bedford evening high school principal	Committee comprised of principals, staff consultants, community representatives
Transcripts	Basic 64 competencies and individualized skills (occupational/vocational, college, or special); includes assessor's name	Competencies and special skills	Combination of Carnegie units and special objectives	Carnegie units	Transfer credits, competencies and Carnegie units
Sponsors	State board of education, local schools on regional basis, some CETA	State board of education, local schools; 5 of 12 programs have CETA participation	State board of education, local schools, some CETA	State board of education, local schools, CETA (New Bedford)	1978-1981 Special Project Funds, State Continuing Education Funds, Local School District

Excerpted from Nickse, Ruth S. Assessing Life-Skills Competence. Pitman Learning, Inc. Belmont, California, 1980, pp. 92-93.

APPENDIX C

FORMS USED IN ADVANCE

C.1. STUDENT ACTION PLAN FORM

C.2. SAMPLE COMPETENCY STATEMENT FORM

C.1.

ADVANCE - STUDENT ACTION PLAN

NAME: _____ ENTRY DATE: _____

Student Goals and Plans:

(Educational)

(Vocational)

ADVANCE Course Assignments:

Begin With:

Life Experiences: (which may be assessed for elective credit)

High School:

	Required Credits	Elective Credits
English		
Social		
Studies		
Math		
Science		
Phys. Ed.		
Health		
Total		

STUDENT NAME P.M.

LIFE EXPERIENCE CATEGORY Home Management - Food Preparation

COMPETENCY STATEMENT

The candidate knows and can apply the principles and the practices of family food preparation at an advanced level.

COMPONENTS Pat can:

1. Identify the four basic food groups
2. Classify foods in terms of nutritive composition
3. Plan nutritionally balanced meals for her family
4. Give examples of nutritional labeling and other label information
5. Identify seasonal good buys and comparative shopping techniques
6. Give examples of home safety and sanitation in food preparation
7. Correctly use terminology popular in food preparation
8. Prepare 20 recipes that are family favorites
9. Plan and implement a variety of family celebrations, including special foods, table settings, decorations, etc.

Measurement Techniques Used: Documentation X Interview___ Product Assessment___ Oral Test___ Presentation___

Written___ Symposium___ Performance___ Objective Test___ Observation___ Simulation___

Other _____

Measured By B.W.
Date of Measurement 4-15-80
Credits Requested _____

Attachment include Notebook, Pictures, Recipes

Approved by Project Director _____
Credit Granted _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

GUIDELINES FOR IDENTIFYING PRIOR AND SPONSORED LEARNING COMPETENCIES

GUIDELINES FOR IDENTIFYING PRIOR AND SPONSORED LEARNING COMPETENCIES

The belief that significant, high school-level learning can take place outside the traditional classroom is an important aspect of the Mounds View Adult Education philosophy and system. Many adult students who enroll in adult education classes have already acquired learning of a measurable, high school-level dimension which ought to be assessed and recognized as part of a diploma program. Learning which students have acquired in connection with jobs, family, military, community volunteer work, travel, individual arts and crafts, enrichment classes, personal growth classes, etc., may well fall under the definition of "prior learning". In order to avoid a "merit badge" approach to crediting, specific guidelines will be followed in awarding credits for experiential learning. To be eligible for diploma recognition, the student's learning should meet each of the following guidelines:

1. LEARNING - Recognition is given only for learning outcomes or competencies--what a person knows and can do, in a particular subject at a specified level--not for the experience per se.

2. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF A SUBJECT - A competency includes both theoretical and practical understanding of a subject. Students should be able to apply the knowledge in different situations.

3. PUBLICLY VERIFIABLE - A competency must be publicly verifiable. The student should be able to communicate and demonstrate that he/she possesses the competency claimed so that the assessor can objectively and accurately evaluate the level of the student's learning.

4. INDEPENDENT FROM CREDITS PREVIOUSLY EARNED - To be eligible for high school credit, a competency should not duplicate credits earned in other ways.

5. CURRENT - Recognition will be given only to high school level learning that the student currently possesses and is able to demonstrate.

6. HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL - The subject and level of the competency should be equivalent or comparable to learning typically found in high schools.